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"I'm with you now, I'm with you ..." : Michael Corleone as gangster figure in Mario Puzo's and Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather texts / by Carmela Coccimiglio.

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ABSTRACT

"I'm with you now. I'm with you . . .": Michael Corleone as Gangster Figure in Mario Puzo's and Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather Texts

Carmela Coccimiglio

This thesis examines the construction of the gangster figure as embodied by Michael Corleone in Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather, The Godfather, Part II, and The Godfather, Part III. The examination of Michael is contextualized in an analysis of the conventions of the gangster's construction in early American film, specifically the "Golden Trilogy" comprised of Little Caesar, The Public Enemy and Scarface. The "Golden Trilogy" represents the height of the gangster's representation in film; therefore, to critically analyze Coppola's films is to recognize what Coppola borrows and changes for his films and how his choices affect the portrayal of the gangster. Also important to this study is the novel on which Coppola's films are based, Mario Puzo's The Godfather. A number of changes to the conventions of the gangster genre are located in Puzo's texts, especially in terms of ethnicity, masculinity and an emphasis on religion. The result is that while Michael's roots are located in the early films, he emerges as a different kind of gangster, one that faces inner conflicts as a result of his lifestyle. Michael's choices in the novel and the films, especially his decision to legitimize the Corleone Family, place him in contrast to his father, Vito, the aging Don who must appoint a successor. That Michael's dream is to live an all-American, or WASP, lifestyle indicates that the family and business will no longer be distinctly Sicilian under his leadership. Although Vito believes Michael to be the ideal successor, he is proven to be very wrong in Coppola's films. The disastrous consequences of Michael's choices destroy everything that Vito appoints him to

protect; thus, Michael is inappropriate as a successor and a gangster, a point that Puzo hints at in his novel. Coppola's take on the gangster is that he can never be a success and he therefore must lose what he has been fighting so ferociously for, and deal with his losses until the day he dies, which is precisely the fate of Michael Corleone.

Dedication

Like Michael Corleone, I have sat for many hours in a chair made vacant by the passing of my father. Michael's office chair is crafted from dark brown leather and wood and has exquisite detail. The chair I sit in as I write this is a typical kitchen chair: it is not particularly unique for a chair, having an inconspicuous pattern and silvery handle, but it serves its purpose in this room. Michael's chair bears an obvious imprint from its original owner: the back of the chair has a visible dent from the person who occupied it previously, mirroring the lingering memory of the first owner. I feel my back sink into this chair, too, and when I sit here I am flooded with the memories of the person who used to occupy this seat: Saverio Coccimiglio, my father. The practicality and simplicity of this chair testify to the type of person my father was. I continue to believe in his assertion that education throughout one's lifetime provides opportunities unlike anything else. That is why I sat in this chair to complete my thesis. I continue to be inspired by his example of diligence and devotion to everything that he did and hope that I can continue to make him proud. This thesis is dedicated to him. Ti amo, Papa.

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I look forward to sharing my thesis with my uncle, Joe, aunt, Fran, and cousins, Natasha and Adrian. I am grateful for their continued support of my studies. Thanks to my Nonno, Carmine Florio, for shedding insight into the many meanings of the word "Don." Our conversations were very enlightening.

I am possibly the luckiest person in the world to be surrounded by such beautiful friends: Amy Boyer, Gloria Burns, Agnes Rogaczewski, Lori Romano and Joey Smuczek, whom I have known for over a decade. Each of us has experienced the dizzying highs and the painful lows that life has to offer, and the one thing that remains constant is that we are all there to laugh hysterically and point fingers, or to hug tightly and console each other. I know that there are very special things in store for each of them, and I cannot wait to share in their accomplishments. They are my second family, and I am so happy to have them all in my life. I thank them for their support and encouragement, and, also, for allowing me to vent!

To Jenn Sommers, my "roomie": I will miss her this year. I will be at the University of Ottawa, and she will be at Lakehead University, but we will continue to bond over Grey's Anatomy and living vicariously through one another when our lives get a little boring. Her compassion through difficult times makes me certain that she will succeed as a nurse, and her dedication in whatever she does makes me excited to see the wonderful things she will do. I miss her and I will miss all of our adventures together! Her never-ending encouragement, especially in terms of calculating what percentage of the thesis I finished along the way, was very clever! And . . . IT'S FINISHED!!!

I would like to thank Lakehead University's English Department. I picked the perfect department through which to complete my degree because of the caliber of the staff and professors there. My work and academic success is a testament to the quality of instruction there and the dedication of the professors to the achievement of their students. I thank all of them for their support through the years, and for the enlightening discussions that I have had with many of them about the gangster figure.

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Zac Spagat has acted as a sounding board during this process and sat patiently as I verbally tried to explain and understand difficult theories (and there were many of those). I am so happy that he has taken an interest in my work and has pointed out examples of modern gangsters to me. My favourite is probably Don Bot of Futurama. (And Calculon, though not a gangster, is neat too. "Metric? I've always known. But for you my darling, I'm willing to convert"). The

movie nights that he and I shared were so much fun! Boondock Saints was crazy! And, of course, his distractions were very welcomed during frustrating moments of writer's block. He's also been a huge support for me, more than he'll ever know, as I completed this thesis during a very difficult time in my life. I am indebted to him for his encouraging hugs and kind words. I hope that he and I can celebrate over some baklava.

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Introduction

"'Make Way for the Bad Guy': Introducing Michael Corleone"

To say that The Godfather attained legendary status in the film adaptations directed by Francis Ford Coppola would be an accurate statement. To underplay the source material of Mario Puzo's novel, however, means missing out on not only much of the films' plotlines, which are alluded to but not fully presented onscreen, but also on what Coppola has borrowed from the films and how he has chosen to present the novel's material in a visual format. The work of both Coppola and Puzo can be located within the history and production of the gangster figure in both film and literature since weaving a gangster story is essentially borrowing and also reinventing certain conventions of the genre. Not only is The Godfather an acclaimed novel in its own right and also within the gangster genre, but it is the springboard from which Coppola dives in crafting his films. To study the presentation of the gangster figure, particularly Michael Corleone who appears in Puzo's novel and Coppola's films, involves identifying the presence of the genre's conventions established in 1930s American films, recognizing the changes that are made to these conventions, and analyzing how the changes affect the construction of the gangster.

The focus of my thesis is an examination of the gangster, specifically of the Godfather as a gangster. The connection between the religious position of godfather and the criminal role of gangster is something that is not evident in 1930s American film. The gangster-as-Godfather that is well-known in modern times was created by Puzo in his novel. Puzo tells us that "'[t]he Godfather' was never, never used as a term for a gangster until [he] made it up" (qtd. in Cowie 216). The term's religious connotations mean that it is not merely an address that is employed out of respect, similarly to the words "uncle" or "aunt," which is the way Puzo explains the

word's meaning (qtd. in Cowie 216). Nor is it only an address that is used out of religious respect which is something that Tom Hagen plays up when he speaks to Jack Woltz. Hagen describes Vito Corleone as Johnny Fontane's godfather, telling Woltz that the position entails a "very close, a very sacred religious relationship" (Puzo 60). While it is true that Vito is a legitimate religious godfather, Puzo employs the title to describe a Mafia Don, meaning that there are other implications. Coppola creates a solid link between the two roles, with a gangster solidifying his criminal position while simultaneously earning the religious title. The taking on of both roles is demonstrated in the first film's baptismal montage. As this thesis will show, the Godfather functions as the Pope in the Mafia because he holds the ultimate position in its structure, and possesses power over life and death. The Godfather is treated as a Pope, holding out his hand to be kissed and demanding to be addressed by the formal title, as Vito suggests to Amerigo Bonasera when they speak in The Godfather film. This godfather as gangster duality is not sacrilege; it is integral to the operation of the family and business in Puzo and Coppola's texts.

The Godfather, the focus of this project, is Michael Corleone who appears in both Puzo and Coppola's texts. Puzo's novel illustrates the transfer of power between an ailing Godfather and his youngest son, who is taking up the position and must learn the subtleties that are essential to maintaining power. Although this transference of power is central to the novel and also the three films, there is a contender to Michael's position and that is his father, Vito. The very title of Puzo's novel suggests an ambiguity, for there is not only one Godfather present. In contrast to the 1930s "Golden Trilogy" films, Puzo constructs two Godfathers who are quite different from one another. In theory, however, there can only be one Godfather. Having two who hold the position simultaneously begs the question of who exactly the Godfather is. Puzo constructs the

model Godfather in Vito, and through Marlon Brando's memorable performance of the character in The Godfather, Vito usually stands out as the most important character. However, it is in Michael that the tension stemming from embracing his father's model and position are found, and this is what makes Michael a valuable character to analyze. Michael would prefer not to take over his father's role in any way, but he his forced to fill it because of the attempt on his father's life. Michael's personal preference ultimately has no bearing on the circumstances, for, as Robert Warshow explains, "we are not permitted to ask whether at some point he [the gangster] could have chosen to be something else than what he is" (101). As such, Michael must adapt to the role and come into the proper behaviour for the role while abandoning his dreams of assimilation and an all-American life. What the novel suggests is that Michael cannot reconcile his personal dreams with his obligation to ensure the protection and survival of the Corleone family and business, so there are going to be drastic changes to both under his control. Although it is only suggested in the novel, evidence of Michael's unfulfilled desire to assimilate is at the forefront of The Godfather, Part II, where the characters lament the family's existence and the running of the business that is lost when Vito dies. What makes Michael important as a gangster figure is that he has a standard that he must attempt to meet which is found in his father, and when he deviates from the standard he not only affects the well-being of the family, he also emerges as a new type of gangster, a new Godfather.

The gangsters in 1930s American film view the entrance into a gangster lifestyle as a way to achieve success, particularly the American Dream of success comprised of such things as wealth, power and family. Thus, the gangsters in the "Golden Trilogy" films Little Caesar (Mervyn Le Roy, 1930), The Public Enemy (William A. Wellman, 1931) and Scarface (Howard Hawks, 1932) look at becoming a gangster as something that they greatly desire in order to achieve the

rewards that go along with the lifestyle. Michael Corleone is in contrast to the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters because he does not want to be a gangster and, by corollary, he does not want to be like his father. Al Pacino, who plays Michael in the three film adaptations, says he has "always felt Michael had a kind of a disdain for gangsters . . ." ("Bonus Materials"). Pacino's interpretation of Michael's dislike of gangsters means that Michael comes to dislike himself once he becomes one. In The Godfather, Part III, Coppola illustrates the depths of Michael's self-hatred through the diabetes that ravages his body (Man 125). Although Michael has to return to his family and take on a position to protect it, he is torn by the life and dreams that he has to leave behind, and traces of his dream are found in how he operates the business, particularly in The Godfather, Part II. Being a part of his father's Mafia activities is not at all what Michael desires because he sees another way to attain the American Dream. In the novel and films, Michael tries to live as a WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant), attending Dartmouth College to become a mathematics professor (Puzo 78), and planning to marry a WASP-American woman, Kay Adams. Michael also served in the Marines during World War II, returning to America during his sister's wedding. That Michael is a Marine illustrates that his allegiance is to America, not to his father or his institution.

Besides the convention of the American Dream, there are four others established in the "Golden Trilogy" films that shape my analysis of the gangster figure. The convention of ethnicity is perhaps the most important convention because it reveals a significant contrast between WASP Americans and all 'Other,' or ethnic, Americans. According to Jonathan Munby, creating an "other" in the gangster allows America to "define itself and to legitimate its right to dominance" (62). Since the gangster is an ethnic and allegedly susceptible to criminal activity, as I will discuss, enforcing WASP values creates a class of people that are to be

respected and valued since they are the opposite of the "others." WASP culture, then, necessitates the identification of an "other" in order to define itself by contrast. Presenting the American way of life through contrast, however, becomes paradoxical. It is necessary for a representation of the "other" to always be produced even though the presence, background, and activity of the "other" are the very things that the dominant American system is attempting to suppress (Munby 62).

Werner Sollors advocates an "inclusive definition of ethnic literature . . . [consisting of] works written by, about, or for persons who perceived themselves, or were perceived by others, as members of ethnic groups . . ." (Beyond 243). Although Puzo expressed reluctance about being perceived exclusively as a writer of "that subject," meaning ethnic literature (Messenger 15), The Godfather fits Sollors' definition. Puzo attempted to avoid this label during his career but he found little success as a writer and had trouble supporting his family. Like Vito Corleone when he lost his job at Abbandando's grocery store, Puzo was forced to do something that he did not want to do when he found himself in desperate circumstances. He decided to "grow up and sell out . . . [s]o [he] told [his] editors OK, [he'd] write a book about the Mafia . . ." (Godfather Papers 34). Puzo also resembles his character Michael Corleone who, like Puzo, would rather avoid being labeled an "ethnic" but circumstances required both Michael and Mario to become involved in activities that make them be identified as such.

Ethnic writers, like Puzo, have a unique audience. Generally speaking, writes Sollors, "[e]thnic writers . . . confront an actual or imagined double audience, composed of 'insiders' and of readers . . . who are not familiar with the writer's ethnic group" (Beyond 249). The doubleness of the audience parallels the doubleness that is present in the novel with respect to the Sicilian Corleones and the WASP-Americans occupying the same country. Because the

Corleones are not allowed entrance into general American society because of their ethnicity, The Godfather constructs a separate Corleone world that operates within the society from which they are barred. The Corleones, as insiders of the world they have constructed for themselves, are comparable to Jacques Derrida's deconstructive notion of the centre which is "paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside it*" (emphasis original, 279). What Derrida means is that instead of being ultimate and fixed, a centre floats and is therefore never permanent or authentic. To relate Derrida's notion to The Godfather, during the meeting of the Dons of the Five Families, Vito tells the men: "Who is to say we should obey the laws they make for their own interest and to our hurt? And who are they then to meddle when we look after our own interests? *Sonna cosa nostra* . . . these are our own affairs" (Puzo 291). The world of the ethnic Corleones has its own laws and governs its own activities, illustrating that it borrows elements from America but adapts them for their own needs. The Corleone world is also distinctly ethnic and represents a "return to a Sicily located within America" (Chiampi 23) which is why Michael is required to return to his ethnic Sicilian roots when he returns to the family.

Although Michael tries to live as a WASP at the beginning of Puzo's novel and Coppola's first film adaptation, he is immediately identified as an ethnic character, which draws attention to all the stereotypes connected to a person of his ethnicity. Annette Wheeler Cafarelli identifies the power of an Italian last name to call stereotypes to mind. Once the reader recognizes that Michael's last name is an Italian one, the connection to gangland activities which forms the basis of the stereotype is immediate. As Cafarelli illustrates in her example of a resumé with a British last name and one with an Italian one, "the name of Smith is not laden with cultural stereotypes" (45). In fact, "discriminatory ethnic stereotyping *precedes*" all knowledge about Italian-

Americans (emphasis added, 45).[1] Significantly, when introducing each of the three Corleone sons, Puzo's narrator identifies only Michael by both his first and last names (Puzo 16). However, Michael is the least ethnic of his brothers when the novel opens. That Michael does not self-identify as an ethnic makes no difference to the power of the stereotype. Franco Minganti points to evidence from the field of psychology that indicates "our perception of individuals is primarily characterized by stereotype traits, once we know they belong to a certain ethnic group" (258), meaning that a reader of The Godfather will invoke Italian stereotypes about Michael as soon as he is revealed as a Corleone. In fact, as Minganti states, the fact that Michael is the least Italian of the Corleone siblings in no way lessens the power of the stereotype. Although "our first impressions are that he speaks perfect English, doesn't swear, [and] appears a bit aloof in the family life," all of which characterize him as well-behaved and non-ethnic, Minganti asserts that "the contiguity of background information" (259) in terms of the setting, the reader's awareness of Vito Corleone's criminal lifestyle, and Michael's last name all call to mind stereotypes of Italians.

The American gangster is constructed in both literature and film through the adherence to established conventions of the genre. By examining the gangsters in Puzo's novel and Coppola's film adaptations, I will locate the roots of the Corleones within the conventions of early American film. Then, I will illustrate how the conventions of the genre change through their adaptation by Puzo and, in turn, Coppola in his three films. The focus of the thesis is Michael Corleone, and there are a number of elements in his character that connect him to the "Golden Trilogy" films. In my first chapter, I analyze the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters in the context of

[1] Cafarelli calls attention to "the subordination implicit in the actual hyphenation" of the referent Italian-American, and will not employ it herself (43). She asserts that "only when the term British American becomes an equally commonplace qualifier, will ethnic hyphenations and portmanteaus cease to imply secondary status" (43). I choose to keep the hyphenation because it symbolizes Michael's split between his desire to be an American, and, hence, a non-ethnic, and his requirement to recognize that he is an ethnic-American when he must rejoin the family.

five conventions: ethnicity, masculinity, success and the American Dream, the death of the gangster, and real life connections. These conventions establish who the gangster is to be, and how he is expected to behave. As the first chapter articulates, the ethnic American is denied acceptance into general WASP-American society; therefore, he takes another route, the route of the gangster, to try and achieve the American Dream, a route which, paradoxically, involves the shedding of all ethnic markings. The convention of ethnicity can be located in Puzo's novel, but there is a significant change made to it. Whereas the "Golden Trilogy" gangster is required to abandon all ties to his ethnicity as it is located in the mother figure, Puzo makes both ethnicity and family integral to the shaping of his gangsters.

Puzo's novel, The Godfather (1969), is the focus of the second chapter, where I examine how Puzo borrows certain conventions from the "Golden Trilogy" and changes these to create the characters of Vito and Michael Corleone. Puzo confesses, with shame, that he wrote the novel "entirely from research. [He] never met a real honest-to-god gangster" (Godfather Papers 35). This statement illustrates that Puzo is acknowledging his reliance on preexisting conventions which Coppola, in turn, reworks for his film gangsters. Puzo borrows the "Golden Trilogy" conventions with the result bringing a new gangster figure into the picture, a Godfather. Because Puzo reworks such conventions as ethnicity, masculinity and emphasizes religious elements in his novel, his shaping of the gangster makes the figure not only a papal one, but also a Sicilian one that is required to assert his masculinity in order to maintain patriarchal power. In the novel, two Godfathers give way to one, Michael Corleone. Suspicion surrounds Michael because he downplays his Sicilian ethnicity and there are questions about his heterosexuality and masculinity, just as there are about Rico Bandello in Little Caesar. Although Michael is reborn into his ethnicity and proves his heterosexuality and masculinity in order to hold his position as

patriarch and Don, the fact that he wants to legitimize the business and have all-American children indicates that he is a different gangster than his father was, and also that the dreams he had for himself as a young man have not dissipated. Although Michael is a reborn ethnic in Puzo's novel, in The Godfather, Part II, Coppola illustrates that he resembles the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters because he tries to live as a WASP. It is only when he is approaching the end of his life that Michael accepts his ethnicity again and is also reborn into Christianity, but Coppola suggests in Part III that, by this time, these are good intentions that come too late to save what he was appointed, and failed, to protect.

My analysis of Coppola's three film adaptations of Puzo's novel in the third chapter of this project is based on James Griffith's assertion that "we can examine adaptations in order to determine what choices a filmmaker makes when bringing a novel to the screen" (70), and, I would add, how these choices affect the presentation of the novel's major characters and themes. In his three adaptations, The Godfather (1972), The Godfather, Part II (1974), and The Godfather, Part III (1990), the five "Golden Trilogy" conventions are evident, just as they are in Puzo's novel. However, Coppola makes significant changes to these conventions as they are represented in the novel. In fact, Puzo, too, makes changes to his own adaptation of the conventions since he has writing credits, with Coppola, on all three screenplays. Part II contains much of the material that is omitted from the first film as well as some material that is not in the novel. Part III, however, is more of a continuation of the film trilogy since it contains original storylines, so it acts as a sequel to Part II, essentially completing the story of Michael Corleone. Although the "Golden Trilogy" conventions are employed in shaping Michael and Vito onscreen, there are changes made that alter Michael's portrayal as a gangster figure. One of the most significant changes is in the convention of masculinity. Michael is not effeminate in the

films as he is in the novel, so he does not have to prove his worth by proving his masculinity in order to be taken seriously as a Godfather. Instead, the tension that is present in the novel comes through in the changes to other conventions in the films. For example, Coppola heightens the religious elements in the films. In the first film, Michael simultaneously becomes a godfather to his nephew and the Corleone Don. Significantly, Michael turns back to religion in Part III to seek redemption for all of the mistakes that he has made from the moment he assumed his position in front of the church altar. By this point in the trilogy, Michael is no longer God-like but has become a penitent seeking forgiveness and redemption.

In Coppola's reworking of Michael for the screen, the torment that Michael faces in coming to terms with his Godfather role is tangible. Although his intentions to protect his family may be honourable, the means that he employs to protect them create results that are far worse than his own death could ever be. By completing the story of Michael that Puzo begins, Coppola cements the power of the gangster myth that is about as old as the Corleones' history. He also ensures the telling of a new story through the birth of a modern gangster that nods to all of his predecessors, especially Michael Corleone.

Chapter One

"'The World Is Yours': The Gangster Figure in 1930s American Film"

Introduction

In order to contextualize my analysis of The Godfather novel and films, I will examine the roots of American gangster film, specifically three gangster films of the 1930s in which the conventions of the genre are established. As he is constructed in these films, the gangster serves as the basis of modern gangsters, like Michael and Vito Corleone in Puzo's The Godfather (1969) and Coppola's three film adaptations. The three early films I will analyze are collectively known as the "Golden Trilogy": Little Caesar (Mervyn Le Roy, 1930), The Public Enemy (William Wellman, 1931), and Scarface (Howard Hawks, 1932). These films are considered to be the defining films and represent the pinnacle of the gangster genre; indeed, the films that appear after, and that continue to appear in the present day, rely on conventions originating in these three 1930s films. There are specific elements in the early films that serve as seeds for the construction of gangster Michael Corleone and his father Vito in Puzo's text and Coppola's films. Ethnicity, masculinity, success and the American Dream, the gangster's death, and real life connections are the elements that construct the gangsters of the "Golden Trilogy" films, and these are the elements that Puzo and Coppola draw on in shaping their respective gangsters. The production of gangster films continues after the "Golden Trilogy" but does not reach a comparable level of acclaim and popularity until the appearance of The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972). It is important to see what Puzo and Coppola pull from the genre in order to discover how their texts fit into the genre and what changes are made to the genre's conventions.

In analyzing the changes made to the conventions, it is evident that both texts reinvent the gangster figure.

Ethnicity

The portrayal of ethnicity in connection with the gangster is one key characteristic of the construction of the gangster figure in 1930s American gangster films. The gangster of each "Golden Trilogy" film is presented as a member of an ethnic group. Rico Bandello of Little Caesar is Italian, Tom Powers of The Public Enemy is Irish, and Tony Camonte of Scarface is Italian. The presentation of the criminal as a member of an ethnic group slowly disappears in gangster films after the Production Code is enforced starting in 1934, a Code that governs productions made by the American film industry. However, the connection between certain ethnicities, particularly Italian and Jewish, and a gangland lifestyle is a significant marker of the gangster figure in the 1930s American gangster film. Guidelines found in the Production Code contain stipulations about how ethnicity can be portrayed in film. Carlos Clarens calls attention to Section 1C of the Code which states that "no picture shall be produced that tends to incite bigotry or hatred among people of different races, religions, or national origins" (qtd. in Casillo 399). Although the Production Code is enforced after the "Golden Trilogy" films, censors still have some clout with regards to the presentation of a film's content, including the presentation of ethnicity, in the Pre-Code era. In order to avoid encounters with censors, Hollywood polices itself and counterbalances inappropriate content with morality in various forms (Munby 19). One of the forms of this moral compensation is a Foreword to the film, with the intention being to appease the censors and permit the film's release.

All three "Golden Trilogy" films are preceded by a Foreword. For example, The Public Enemy has the same Foreword as Little Caesar, but also contains a second, original, Foreword that tells audiences the film is not a glorification of the gangster lifestyle. Scarface faces well-documented clashes with censors, and its Foreword is employed as a way to quell the clashes. The Foreword states, in part, that "[t]his picture is an *indictment* of gang rule..." (emphasis added). Gangland activity is a social problem, so it is imperative that audiences do not take the wrong message away about the film or about its gangster. The gangster literally becomes larger-than-life by virtue of his depiction on the screen, so the Foreword tries to humanize Tony Camonte and make him a figure to be despised.

The Foreword is not the only technique that filmmakers employ to appease censors' opinions about the gangster or fears about the figure's popularity. Scenes are often added to a film to ease censorship pressure, as is the case in Scarface. A lengthy scene appears, which is one among several not filmed by director Howard Hawks for just such a purpose, in which newspaper publisher Mr. Garston is conversing with concerned citizens regarding what they can do to fight the gangster. When the topic of government responsibility arises, Garston looks almost directly into the camera and says: "You're the government. All of you." His comments are simultaneously directed towards the other characters in the scene as well as the audience of the film, prompting them to take an active role in fighting against the gangsters presented onscreen.

There are specific ethnic groups which are overrepresented as gangsters in the Pre-Code films, such as the Irish, Italians and Jews. Overrepresentation leads film audiences of the early 1930s to see a justification of racial determinism due to the association of crime and certain ethnic groups (Ruth 74). A number of historical occurrences help to make the association of

crime and people of Italian heritage[1], in particular, an accurate connection to repeat in film. First, as Fred L. Gardaphé points out, Italian gangsters do exist ("Class" 50), so gangsters appearing in film are representative of a social reality. But the fact that Italian gangsters exist does not fully speak to the overrepresentation of Italians as gangsters in film. The timing of Italian immigrant arrivals in the United States is a contributing factor for it coincides with severe and rampant xenophobia, and Americans are quick to point the finger at the foreigner as the cause of crime (Gardaphé, "Class" 50). The sensational trial of two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, also adds to the association of people of Italian heritage with criminal activities. The duo was accused of murdering a paymaster and guard. The trial, beginning in 1921, and subsequent execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in Massachusetts in 1927 is a significant contributing factor to the stereotype of Italians as criminals. Many believe that Sacco and Vanzetti, who were supportive of anarchist causes, were "the innocent victims of political and economic interests determined to send a message about the rising tide of anarchist violence..." (Linder). While there is evidence to support that Sacco probably did murder one of the two men killed during a robbery (Linder), the fact remains that both men are targeted because of their ethnicity. The accused are identified by witnesses as "dark—'probably Italian'" (Linder), illustrating a racialized portrait of the accused and an association of foreigners with evil. Hence, the portrayal of the gangster as a dark, evil, foreign figure like Rico Bandello in Little Caesar stems from historical contributors like the Sacco and Vanzetti trial.

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[1] Following Annette Wheeler Cafarelli's lead, I choose to employ the reference "Italian heritage" or ancestry, rather than the problematic "of Italian descent." Cafarelli states: "As the field of gender studies has made clear, points of language may be small, but they are incremental; we may well ask ourselves, how many times do we hear someone identified using the expression, 'of British descent'?" (42).

The negative stereotype most often associated with people of Italian heritage is the supposition that all Italians are gangsters, or, more generally, that Italians are criminals. There is another event in American history besides the Sacco and Vanzetti trial and execution that plays a significant role in the development and perpetuation of the Italian-as-criminal stereotype. In America, the largest mass lynching (Bondanella 173) occurred in New Orleans in 1891 after the murder of a police chief, with the victims being of Italian ancestry (Pacchioli). At this time immigrants are being blamed for the economic conditions and Italians in particular are suspect because of their reluctance to assimilate in comparison with other groups, as well as their open socialization with African Americans (Pacchioli). As Werner Sollors articulates, the meaning of the word "ethnic" has been associated, particularly in the mid-nineteenth century, with race (Beyond 25). Italians, particularly those from the southern provinces, have been considered non-white (Ucelli), and certainly socializing with black people has a role to play in the lynching of Italian people. Racially-charged attitudes towards those of Italian heritage, then, lead not only to violence but to the development of discriminatory attitudes and the establishment of stereotypes, such as the Italian-as-criminal.

The above historical examples provide insight into how it comes to be that the gangster draws an immediate association with the Italian immigrant. Yet, a contradiction arises when the nationality of the most recognized American gangster is considered. Marilyn Yaquinto points out that Al Capone is American-born (7). Capone does not even consider himself to be of Italian ancestry, saying that "[he's] no Italian, [he] was born in Brooklyn" (Yaquinto 7). Capone's popularity in the media, however, cements the association between gangsters and Italian origins (Woll and Miller 280). An American-born gangster is a large threat, even more so than an immigrant gangster. As the homegrown gangster is a product of America's existing social

systems, he speaks to the problems with these systems. The fact that members of the media place Capone's place of birth in Italy makes Capone less of a "homegrown problem" (Yaquinto 7). If a gangster is foreign-born, he can immediately be classified as an "other," as an outsider, and his criminal activity can be partly explained by his non-American origin. In other words, if the gangster is a foreign import, America is not to blame for the criminal activities that he conducts there.

There is a scene in Scarface which addresses the issue of the gangster as a problem that originates outside of America. There is a scene in which newspaper publisher Mr. Garston suggests that one of the ways to deal with the gangster problem is to "[p]ut teeth in the deportation act. These gangsters don't belong in this country. Half of them aren't even citizens." Garston is pushing for gangsters to be shipped back to where they came from since their emigration from their country of origin symbolizes the infiltration of evil and criminal behaviour onto American soil. Garston also suggests that immigrants who are not American citizens are less patriotic and law-abiding than those who become citizens. Supporting Garston's ideas is a man with an Italian accent who tells Garston: "[t]hey [gangsters] bring nothing but disgrace to my people." A model American citizen, the Italian-American appeases protests by censors and audiences by agreeing that his ethnicity tends to produce bad seeds. Although he is a model citizen, a law-abiding immigrant, it is the model citizen who reinforces the Italian immigrant as gangster because he agrees with Garston's opinion about immigrants and because he appears only for a few seconds in only one scene. Tony Camonte's illegal activities as a man of Italian heritage overshadow the views of the model citizen, especially since his screen time greatly outweighs that of the model immigrant citizen.

There is another important function of ethnicity with regards to the construction of the gangster in the "Golden Trilogy" films. In order to achieve success, it is necessary for the film gangster to lose all of his ethnic markings and assimilate into the dominant WASP culture. For example, Jonathan Munby analyzes Little Caesar's Rico Bandello as wanting "'in' to the official culture (a promise that is held out to all ethnic immigrants) but ultimately [he] is only allowed to mimic legitimacy" (50). Assimilation is achieved through the imitation of legitimacy, and the imitation of WASP culture. Therefore, ethnicity, or that which contains cultural markers, is not fixed. Sollors explains that "ethnic groups are typically imagined as if they were natural, real, eternal, stable, and static units" ("Introduction" xiii-xiv). The fact that the gangster can choose to downplay his ethnic markings and adopt markings of WASP culture indicates that ethnicity is fluid. One of the ways that ethnic markings are downplayed and replaced by WASP culture is through the frequenting of social clubs and eateries by the gangsters (Ruth 73). At these types of places, the gangster is exposed to music, food and drink that are not associated with his ethnicity (Ruth 73). In the "Golden Trilogy" films there is a correlation between the gangsters spending more time in social settings, and their attainment of greater wealth and power.

Common to the "Golden Trilogy" films is the gangster's mother as a symbol of the family's ethnic ties. The gangster must break these ethnic ties in order to achieve the American Dream, so the films illustrate that the gangster "no more resembles her [the mother] than he does the preferred design of the successful American male" (Yaquinto 45). In The Public Enemy, Tom Powers cuts ties to his mother, and therefore to his ethnic background, by moving out of his mother's home. In fact, if the gangster tries to revert back to the ethnic ties as represented by the mother, he is punished severely. For example, when Tony, a gangster working for Bandello,

converses with his Italian mother and agrees to start attending church again in Little Caesar, he is murdered soon after. For the 1930s screen gangster, the message is clear: assimilate or die.

The shedding of ethnic markings is not only a necessity for the 1930s gangster. It is also required of the actors who portray the gangsters in film. There is a parallel between the actors' and the gangsters' attempt to assimilate into American WASP culture. Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, and Paul Muni play gangsters in Little Caesar, The Public Enemy and Scarface respectively, and they all play gangsters in other films as well. In the "Golden Trilogy" films, Robinson and Muni play gangsters of Italian descent, and Cagney's character is of Irish descent. These actors are unique because, as Munby points out, they are not Anglo-Saxon Protestants (39). Robinson and Muni are both immigrant Jews; Robinson changed his name from Emmanuel Goldenberg and Muni changed his from Friedrich Muni Meyer Weisenfreund (Munby 39). Like many Hollywood actors, Robinson and Muni anglicized their names in order to minimize their religious and ethnic backgrounds in order to assimilate into the dominant American culture and thus be able to succeed in Hollywood. Their actions also reflect those taken by their respective characters to achieve success. They also call attention to the casting of one ethnicity to play another, thereby suggesting that there are two groups: WASP Americans and a heterogeneous Other whereby one ethnicity is easily replaced by another.

Masculinity

In the "Golden Trilogy" films the gangster is created in order to portray a specific version of masculinity. The second definition of the word "masculine" in the Compact Oxford English Dictionary states that the word refers to "the qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men" ("Masculine"). Although it is defined as a traditional notion, and gender is presented as a

"natural sort of being" (Butler 33), gender is a construction. Gender is constructed just as ethnicity is constructed: there is nothing "natural" about ethnic groups (Sollors, "Introduction" xiii-xiv), and there is nothing natural about gender even though linking it with tradition suggests that it has withstood the test of time and is therefore natural. A number of characteristics are highlighted in the "Golden Trilogy" films, including outward appearance and character actions, and together these characteristics present the gangster of the 1930s films as a masculine figure.

One of the ways in which masculinity is constructed in the "Golden Trilogy" films is through outward appearance. It is necessary for the gangster to dress in a specific way to identify himself as a gangster and, more specifically, as a gangster with masculine qualities. The gangster's appearance in the "Golden Trilogy" films is a reflection of the time period's increase in consumerism. The new century brings increased material production, and although America is feeling the effects of the Great Depression well into the 1930s, citizens continue to pay for goods and services that they now regard as necessities (Ruth 64). The gangster's level of consumerism allows the audience to live a wealthy lifestyle vicariously through him. The gangster has the best of everything, including cars, cigars, and homes. One thing that especially marks the gangster's success and his transformation into a gangster is the change in his outer appearance. 1930s gangsters are easily recognized because they wear exquisitely tailored three-piece suits. Little Caesar and The Public Enemy even include scenes in which the newly-made gangster is being fitted for a suit, clothing which is representative of people that undertake business and economical pursuits. A suit exudes power and masculinity, and the three-piece suit in particular represents a man's association with gangland activities. The tailored suit also emphasizes that the gangster is dressing to echo the outer appearance of the successful American businessman.

A gangster's external appearance must be carefully crafted so that it displays the correct message. All elements, from the hat to the shoes, must be carefully selected to present a masculine image because, as the saying goes, "the clothes make the man." Wearing the wrong things can make the gangster appear to be less than a man, or not a man. A prime example of the power of clothing to shape masculinity appears in Scarface. Tony Camonte shows off some of his new possessions to Poppy. Poppy notices Tony's jewellery and replies: "It's kinda effeminate isn't it?" Tony wearing jewellery makes him look like a woman, and calls into question his masculinity, thereby calling into question his abilities as a gangster. He becomes more than a woman, a gay man, and therefore the construction of the gangster is homophobic.

Not only does a gangster's physical appearance construct him as a masculine character, but his actions also have to be read as masculine. Two words that are spoken by characters in the "Golden Trilogy" films are "soft" and "yellow." Accusing a "Golden Trilogy" gangster of being soft or yellow is a direct challenge to his masculinity in terms of his toughness and response to fear, respectively. In Little Caesar, Rico Bandello refers to himself as an ideal man to become a gangster at the beginning of the film when he says: "this game isn't for soft guys," alluding to his own masculinity by asserting his toughness. When speaking to Tom Powers in The Public Enemy, "Nails" Nathan refers to "Putty Nose" and his previous swindling of Powers. Nathan tells Powers: "That guy's gonna get you again. He thinks you're soft." Powers, who is an established gangster at this point in the film, takes Nathan's comment to mean that "Putty Nose" doubts his toughness and therefore his masculinity. Nathan's words prompt Powers into action. He immediately murders "Putty Nose," eliminating all doubt and reasserting his masculinity and power. There is a similar situation in Scarface. As Tony Camonte is about to be handcuffed, Guarino refers to his rambling tirade and scoffs: "I told you you would show up this way. Get

you in a jam without a gun and you squeal like a yellow rat." Here, Guarino implies that Camonte is a coward and Camonte responds by trying to run from Guarino and the police. Camonte's attempt at escape is his way of asserting his masculinity to the point of alluding that he would rather risk death than be called a coward. All of these examples illustrate that masculinity is constructed in the gangster figure through the language of toughness and cowardice.

Although gangsters are constructed as masculine figures in the "Golden Trilogy" films, the masculinity of Little Caesar's Rico Bandello is questioned. Rico displays no interest in the opposite sex, as is evidenced in the banquet scene where "he himself is flanked conspicuously by two men" (Peary 292), although he is pleased that the other male guests have brought female companions. The film suggests that Rico has sexual feelings for his partner, Joe Massara, who is the dancing partner and significant other of Olga Stassoff. Because it is common for gangster films to highlight the gangster's distrust of women (Golden 81), Rico directs his anger towards Olga, treating her as the rival as Jack Shadoian suggests (39). Olga, then, stands in the way of Rico's relationship with Joe. Rico's feelings are evident when he attempts to shoot Joe for trying to leave the gang. It is impossible to leave, for, as Rico says, "[n]obody ever quit [him]," a statement that has a feeling of romantic sentiment.

As he approaches Joe and points a gun, a phallic symbol, at him, Rico's face fills the screen to convey the intense emotions he is experiencing at the prospect of killing someone so close to him. The tension of the moment is heightened as Joe pushes Rico to act, but Rico backs away, his face contorted. Rico cannot kill this man. Otero, another gang member, shoots Joe after chastising Rico for being "soft" or effeminate, for letting his emotions overrule his decisions. Rico himself recognizes that his feelings for Joe stopped him from firing. He tells Otero: "This

is what [he gets] for liking the guy too much." Rico had previously told Joe that love is for men who are soft, meaning that turning outside of the male gang and taking an interest in women is a sign of male weakness. The dangers of abandoning masculinity as advocated in the film are evidenced in the fact that the attempt on Joe's life is what leads to Rico's death.

It is possible for the relationship between Rico and Joe in Little Caesar to be analyzed in a different way. Peter E. Bondanella does not see the relationship as one that questions Rico's sexuality. Instead, he sees the nature of their relationship as a testament to the type of relationship that males of their ethnic background have with one another: "Male friendship and bonding are, of course, a very important Italian and Italian American trait and cultural theme. But unlike many Americans, Italian men do not consider physical contact—embraces, kisses on the cheek—as evidence of an effeminate or homoerotic side to their characters" (185). Bondanella's insight is important as it indicates that filmgoers who are not of Bandello and Massara's ethnic background can misconstrue their relationship and the physical contact between them as having a "homosexual basis" (Bondanella 185) when it is, in fact, common for Italian-American men to be very physical with one another.

While Bondanella is correct to identify that the physical contact between Rico and Joe is representative of the contact between people of Italian heritage, he seems to have interpreted the relationship as purely homosexual when it is, at the very least, an example of homosocial desire. In fact, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes, both male sexual and social bonds appear along the same continuum of "'men-loving-men' and 'men-promoting-the-interests-of-men' . . ." (3), with the role of women such as Olga Stassoff being to mediate the same-sex desire that exists between two men like Rico and Joe. The gang lifestyle as portrayed in the "Golden Trilogy" films such as Little Caesar is based on "men-promoting-the-interests-of-men" through social

relationships, regardless of whether homosexual relationships are also present. But it is important to note that Rico Bandello's sexual orientation is questioned in the film because it does assert that the figure of the gangster must be a masculine one.

Success/American Dream

American gangster films of the 1930s, particularly the "Golden Trilogy" films, have another element in common: the pursuit of the American Dream. The gangster is after the type of success available to those who live in America, the type of success that is supposedly available to immigrants who assimilate into American culture. The American Dream dictates that people who are willing to make sacrifices, work hard, and follow certain rules can be eligible for success. Viewing the "Golden Trilogy" films, it is evident that the gangster can never fully achieve the American Dream, or that he can achieve it briefly prior to his death. The gangster is generally blocked from reaching and maintaining the level of success that is available to a person living in the United States. As a representative of the lower-class, ethnic immigrant, the gangster figure criticizes assimilation into the American culture and its capitalist exploits.

The American Dream of success, which is defined by wealth, a family, and social status, can only be achieved by the gangster through a commitment to assimilate into the dominant American WASP culture and its values. In order to assimilate, it is necessary for the gangster to shed his ethnic markings and adopt the American WASP lifestyle. It is the desire to belong, or the yearning for "cultural and economic inclusion" (Munby 48), that drives assimilation. Assimilation requires that the gangster take on a new identity, and central to this identity is the adoption of the capitalist work ethic. In order to achieve success, the gangster must adopt this work ethic while at the same time question or deny its value. To be a gangster is to take on the

qualities of the "classic work-obsessed American executive, climbing the corporate ladder of success" (Golden 78). Many gangster films demonstrate the main character's steady overtaking of the position of his higher-ups until he becomes one of the higher-ups, like the "Golden Trilogy" films illustrate. The gang is run very much like a business, with the stress on organization and the following of certain rules. Jack Shadoian describes the gangster as the "monstrous emblem of the capitalist" (qtd. in Golden 79), meaning that the gangster functions as a businessman, an employment which is representative of the American culture, but his business practices involve illegitimate activity. The gangster is a version of the legitimate businessman while also serving as a reminder that not all legitimate businessmen are what they seem.

The gangster as businessman works to counter the traditional American businessman in another way. As previously mentioned, the legitimate businessman is work-obsessed, and so is the gangster but only to a certain extent. Amanda Klein observes that the gangster "challenges the myth of the American (primarily middle class) work ethic, which demands long hours, sacrifice, deferred gratification, and taking orders from superiors in order to achieve financial and social success" (160). The successful gangster, in contrast, works few hours, sacrifices little (in his personal view), receives almost instant gratification, and takes orders from no one. A number of films contain a character such as Little Caesar's "Big Boy" who represents the ultimate possibility for the gangster: material wealth resulting from many men beneath him doing all of the work.

The American Dream, then, is about conforming to preexisting standards and values found in American society (Brill 18). The discussion of gangster as businessman above, however, indicates that the gangster conforms only to a certain extent. Partial conformity results from the fact that the gangster can never really conform. He is denied the opportunity to do so due to his

status as an outsider. As Klein explains, "because of economic, social and/or ethnic differences from the 'moral middle class,' [gangsters must] create their own 'inside,' which affords them justice, security, fame, wealth, and power" (159). Oftentimes, the gangster is already an "insider" because he is an American-born citizen. However, he is still denied equal access to the American Dream, especially because of his ethnicity. Whether the gangster is an immigrant like Johnny Rocco in Key Largo (John Huston, 1948), or American-born but of European ancestry and therefore still identified as an ethnic, he is regarded as foreign in the eyes of American WASP culture.

The discrepancy of wealth between the gangster and the non-ethnic American is what motivates the gangster to strive for the American Dream. Economic mobility, manifested by consumption, leaves no clear-cut social classes (Ruth 70). As a result, the stability of the class structure is threatened as well as the tenure of the aristocracy occupying the top position. A person is not confined to a socioeconomic class for life, highlighted in the ability of a small-time crook to become a gang leader (Ruth 71). All three films comprising the "Golden Trilogy" show the rise of poor men of the proletariat class through the ranks of a gang, with the rise being marked by extravagant consumption. For example, Tom Powers of The Public Enemy and Tony Camonte of Scarface come from poor families. Powers and Caesar Enrico Bandello of Little Caesar are crooks that dream of having more. The contrast between the gangster's humble beginnings and the opulence and excess he reaches as a gang leader serves three purposes. First, it explores the public's fear that social classes are losing their rigidity (Ruth 71). Those that frequent the bars and cabarets similar to the ones in the films may be rubbing shoulders with gangsters and not knowing it. Second, because consumerism marks the newly-made gangster, and because such consumerism can lead to excess, the public is warned about the dangers of

overindulgence, the most obvious of which is death. Third, consumerism illustrates how far a person can move up and away from poverty.

The American Dream is not accessible to all Americans equally. As Munby points out, the meaning of "The World Is Yours" sign that Scarface's Camonte sees is dependent on which section of the city it is viewed from (56). Gangsters like Camonte want to have what the WASP culture already has, and what ethnic immigrants to America, or American-born ethnics, are promised if they conform. It is precisely the message of this sign that draws people like Camonte to America. When faced with the reality of life in America, people who are denied equal access due to their ethnicity and economic status must invent ways to achieve their version of the American Dream. And even when the gangster achieves a version of the American Dream, he must die, expressing "fatalistically[] an inversion of the American [D]ream" (Shadoian 34). The gangster tumbles from the heights of success that define the Dream to land back at the place from which he was hoping to achieve the Dream.

Gangster's Death

Another convention of the American gangster film that is established in the "Golden Trilogy" is the death of the gangster. It is not enough for him to be apprehended by police, and he cannot still be alive when the credits roll. It is necessary for the gangster to face the ultimate punishment for his transgressions, both as retribution for his hideous and violent crimes, and also to serve as a warning to the audience that attempting to cross social and legal boundaries, specifically as ethnic characters on the wrong side of the law, is not acceptable or rewarding. There is a high tension in the film gangster's death, for while gangster films illustrate the limited options people have, particularly immigrants, for integrating into American society, the films

also illustrate that fitting in is impossible for non-WASPs. Leading the life of a gang member guarantees that the gang member will meet his death, and a violent one at that.

The Production Code stipulates that early twentieth century films must contain the gangster's death, and, according to John Springhall, the rationale is twofold: first, according to the censors, the death of the gangster serves as a deterrent of criminal activity in the audience; second, the gangster is made to be the scapegoat of the social conditions caused by the Depression of 1929 through his death (141). The death of The Public Enemy's Tom Powers illustrates Springhall's observations. Even though Powers reconciles with his brother Mike by way of an apology for the bootleg lifestyle he has led, which is a rare occurrence in gangster films, he still dies at the end of the film. Symbolically, his apology is a kind of death, so soon after the apology Tom meets his physical death. Munby is prompted to call Powers' death an "excessive imposition . . ." (63). Powers' death does feel excessive because it occurs following his heartfelt and genuine apology and reunion with his family. The fact remains, however, that Powers has engaged in numerous illegal activities through bootlegging during Prohibition, and has tarnished the family's wholesome lifestyle, and he pays dearly for both.

The manner in which Powers' death is revealed is one of the most arresting scenes in American gangster film, adding to the sense of punishment that is imposed. The Powers' front door is opened by Mike Powers to reveal Tom balanced on his feet, wrapped and tied in a blanket, with his eyes still open. The audience experiences the full shock of the view along with Mike before Tom's lifeless body tips forward and falls to the floor, and the disturbing tone is heightened through the juxtaposition of lively music emitted in the background. The audience is left feeling satisfied that a gangster is punished for his crimes. But also, like Mike who is in shock after the realization that Tom is actually dead, the audience is disturbed that a man is

gunned down after he seems to have committed himself to abandoning the life of a gangster and realizes that gangster life can never be left behind.

The feeling of ambivalence with regards to the convention of the gangster's death is also experienced by viewers of Little Caesar. There exists a conflict within gangster Rico Bandello because of the splitting away that is a result of his success. According to Klein, "[t]he gangster's drive for power and his subsequent success separates him from the rest of the world, and yet it is precisely this separation and/or inability to rely on anyone but himself that always leads to the gangster's demise" (160). Because he does not trust women and has to end his relationship with Joe Massara, Rico does find himself to be alone, even though it is always presumed that success brings social connections. Rico is alienated by his ambition and is forced to go into hiding, living in poverty. As he lies dying from Flaherty's gunshots, he utters the last line of the film: "Mother of Mercy, is this the end of Rico?" As Munby notes, Rico's question is rhetorical, for actor Edward G. Robinson, the star of the first talking gangster film, paves the way for future gangster films, many in which he plays the leading character (63). But Rico's question can also be interpreted in another way, as his final understanding that he is mortal and therefore capable of both failure and success equally (Shadoian 48). Facing his own death, the question represents Rico's startling realization that he has come crashing down from the heights of success in the criminal underworld. At the same time, as Shadoian notes, Edward G. Robinson's stress on the word "Rico" serves as an indication that he is meeting his end as self-absorbed as he has been throughout the film (48), and therefore has not changed a bit. With Rico's death in a police setup, ambivalence is present just as it is in The Public Enemy. The audience is at once supportive of Rico because of his appeal to a higher religious power at the moment of his death,

but at the same time the audience is repulsed by his selfishness and relieved, even happy, that he is finally being punished.

The discussion of the previous "Golden Trilogy" films hints at the fact that the gangster not only dies, but he dies violently. Robert Warshow explains that "we gain the double satisfaction of participating vicariously in the gangster's sadism and then seeing it turned against the gangster himself" (qtd. in Klein 160). This violent gangster death and the sadistic feeling of the viewer come across in the death of Tony Camonte in Scarface. Tony revels in his gangster role, whistling before he commits murders and thumbing his chin at the authorities who surround his fortified home near the end of the film. After the death of his beloved sister, Cesca, Tony has nothing else left to lose so he runs just as he is about to be handcuffed, and is quickly gunned down. Tony revels in committing violent acts and the audience is tempted to root for him and his confidence. But when his sister is killed as a result of Tony's jealousy, the audience is forced to switch sides and support Guarino shooting Tony, thus identifying with the gangster and his sadism and also separating itself from him through his violent death.

Real Life Connections

Another convention established in the "Golden Trilogy" films is a connection made to historical gangsters. A number of early gangster films draw elements of contemporary gangland figures into their fiction, and the audience of such films would have recognized these elements. The criminal exploits of historical gangsters were bombarded to the public through various media outlets, making film depictions easily recognizable as a reworking of real-life occurrences. Similarly to the death of the onscreen gangster, censors had a strong opinion about the portrayal of historical gangsters, especially if they were not condemned for their actions. It is particularly

necessary for gangsters based on historical figures to be punished in order to counteract the public's fascination with the gangster figure, a fascination that onscreen portrayals no doubt contribute to.

Public fascination with the gangster abounds in the most recognizable American gangster of all time, Al Capone, who operates out of Chicago, Illinois, during the Prohibition era. Many gangster films make reference to Capone because of his notoriety attained through vicious acts of violence committed along with his gang. For these reasons, filmmakers must tread carefully when including allusions to historically accurate material because strict censorship forbids "biographical glorification of a real gangster-hero like Capone . . ." (Smyth 539). Historically accurate details, such as names, have to be obscured in order to appease the censors (Smyth 539); however, the allusions are not lost on the audience. For example, the title of the film Scarface refers to Capone's nickname, earned because of the scar etched on his face during a fight. Names of characters also allude to historical gangsters. Camonte, the gangster's last name in Scarface, closely resembles the name Capone, and other gangsters associated with Capone are adapted as well (Smyth 554), with Colosimo becoming Costillo in the film. Even the infamous Saint Valentine's Day Massacre that Capone oversees is recognizable in Scarface. Yaquinto describes the events of that fateful day as follows: "Capone's men, some dressed in police uniforms, ambushed seven members of George 'Bugs' Moran's gang. Capone's men lined their victims up against the wall of a Clark Street warehouse and gunned them down using submachine guns and shotguns" (27). The Massacre, as it is presented in Scarface, involves seven of Gaffney's men being murdered by Camonte, but only their shadows are visible against a wall as they are murdered in order to somewhat obscure the reference to the St. Valentine's Day

Massacre and also to conceal some of the violence of the scene. Nevertheless, the connections to Capone are identifiable.

Although the "Golden Trilogy" films are produced in the Pre-Code era, there are still pressures placed on the filmmakers to adhere as much as possible to the stipulations of the Code, especially with regards to depictions of historical gangsters, if their films are to be deemed acceptable for presentation in theatres. Analyzing Scarface provides an idea of the challenges 1930s filmmakers faced in trying to work around the censors. One of the major problems, according to censors of the time, had to do with the film's title. Originally, the film was entitled Scarface. Censors, however, wanted the title changed to "Yellow" or "Shame of the Nation" (Smyth 556) in order to pass judgment on the Capone references and ensure that audiences absorbed the proper message and did not glorify the gangster. The film was eventually released with its original title along with the Foreword and additional scenes that were prompted by the censors' reactions to the film in its original state.

The allusions to real gangsters and gangster activity generate a buzz around the films and increase the mystery that shrouds individuals such as Al Capone. Writers of gangster films often claim to have contact with real gangsters to obtain accurate information. For example, Scarface director Howard Hawks and screenwriter Ben Hecht "claimed a 'working relationship' with the Capone mob" (Woll and Miller 280) while crafting their gangsters. Regardless of whether the contact actually occurs or not, planting the idea that it may have occurred creates an aura of authenticity to the film's fiction and adds to the audience's interest. In turn, historical gangsters like Capone responded to their onscreen portrayal by becoming more aware of the projection of their own image. Thus, the fictional film gangster and the real historical gangster speak to and inform one another.

Al Capone himself was very concerned with his screen image as his celebrity status rose, indicating the power of film to affect public perception of the gangster figure. Ben Hecht had to appease Capone's representatives:

> Hecht convinced them that the script was about other gangsters back in Chicago familiar to both him [Capone] and to them [Capone's representatives]. Puzzled, they asked: Why, then, is the film called *Scarface*? Hecht told them, "If we call the movie *Scarface*, everybody will want to see it, figuring it's about Al. That's part of the racket we call showmanship." If it was strictly business, it was logical to the gangsters, and they left peacefully. (Yaquinto 29)

The conversation between Hecht and Capone's men is significant for three reasons. First, it demonstrates that gangsters are concerned about how their likeness is presented to the public and want to have a degree of control over that likeness, hinting to the power of the screen image to shape public opinion as well as national myth. Second, the conversation confirms that gangsters operate their businesses by certain rules. Hecht speaks to Capone's representatives in the business terms that they understand, and because Hecht suggests that the film business uses deceptive practices to earn money like the gangster business, Capone's representatives are satisfied by Hecht's explanation. Third, the conversation contains humour at the gangster's expense, bringing the gangster down and humanizing him, and also turning him into an object of ridicule. The film is not about other gangsters in Chicago like Hecht asserts; it is based on the life of Al Capone. This type of humour at the gangster's expense occurs in Scarface itself. Poppy describes Tony Camonte's new apartment as "kind of gaudy," to which he replies: "Ain't it though!" The laughter is at Camonte's expense due to his inability to recognize tasteful

consumption (Ruth 76); thus, the audience is able to distinguish him as lacking in refinement despite his social status by reinforcing that he is an outsider in elite society.

Conclusion

There are five identifiable elements that characterize the portrayal of the gangster figure in the "Golden Trilogy" films: ethnicity, masculinity, success and the American Dream, the gangster's death, and real life connections. The construction of the 1930s film gangster is heavily influenced by historical gangsters as well as contemporary attitudes towards ethnic immigrants; however, much of his construction revolves around a careful emphasis of some characteristics and elements and a downplaying of others. The film gangster of the 1930s attempts to establish a place for himself among the dominant WASP culture, and because he must transgress boundaries in order to fit into American culture, his fate is death as a punishment. Masculinity is a very important part of the "Golden Trilogy" gangster's construction: to be "soft" or "yellow" is to be less than a man and therefore unqualified to be a gangster. These five elements are established in the 1930s as integral to the construction of the film gangster and are part of a formula used in creating the gangster figure even after Tony Camonte meets his fate in the last "Golden Trilogy" film, Scarface.

Chapter Two

"All in the Family, Corleone-Style: The Gangster in Mario Puzo's The Godfather"

Introduction

The "Golden Trilogy" represents the height of American gangster film since it firmly establishes the conventions of the genre and executes them successfully. More importantly, it is the presentation of the gangster figure in the three 1930s films that lays the groundwork for the construction of the gangster in both the film and literature that follows it. In writing his novel The Godfather (1969), Mario Puzo borrows the elements discussed in the previous chapter to shape Michael Corleone and his father Vito, illustrating that these gangsters are adaptations of the 1930s gangsters. However, Michael and Vito Corleone are not merely copies of the "Golden Trilogy" gangster; Puzo alters the preexisting conventions to create a new type of gangster, the Godfather. The novel follows the final journey of ailing gangster Vito and the birth of a new gangster in his son, Michael. Although Michael represents the future of the Corleone Family, there is already a gangster in the novel: his father. In the character of Vito, the conventions established in the 1930s films are generally maintained, with the most important innovation being the connection to the religious figure of the godfather. With the transition to gang life by Michael, however, a complex figure emerges because Michael alters the construction of the 1930s gangster that is embodied by his father. Michael's transition involves an allegiance to the patriarchal Sicilian space from which he is alienating himself when the novel opens. The tension between Michael's allegiance to his country of birth, America, and his family, with its Sicilian roots, are what distinguish Michael from his father and from the 1930s gangster. Although Puzo adheres to the conventions established in the "Golden Trilogy," the alterations that he makes,

especially in terms of the American Dream, ethnicity and masculinity, mark the evolution of a new American gangster figure as represented by Michael Corleone.

Ethnicity

In the previous chapter, I discussed how ethnicity needs to be shed in the "Golden Trilogy" films in order for the gangster to achieve success in America as assimilation into the dominant WASP culture is required for the gangster to gain a sense of belonging; however, real connections between ethnicity and crime mean that total inclusion in American society is impossible. In The Godfather, ethnicity is portrayed in a very different way than in the films. For Puzo's gangsters, assimilation into WASP culture is not required; in fact, it is shunned. The Corleone Family is a distinctly Sicilian operation transplanted into American soil. As Vito sees it, exclusion from the dominant WASP American culture means that Sicilians have to find a way to take care of themselves, and an integral part of their survival is found in their ethnic ties. This is something that Michael, Vito's son, must learn in order to take over as head of the Family. Whereas Vito's identification as an ethnic has never wavered, Michael must abandon his desire to be a WASP and be reborn into his Sicilian ethnicity to ensure the survival of the business and the family.

At the beginning of the novel, Michael makes deliberate choices that alienate him from his family. Preferring a traditional American rise to success, Michael follows a path of "'straight arrow' mobility" (Ferraro 187) by attending an Ivy League university with the goal of becoming a mathematics professor (Puzo 78). Another way that Michael tries to present himself as "all-American" is by enlisting in the Marine Corps the day after Pearl Harbor (Puzo 52). In The Public Enemy, Tom Powers' brother, Mike, enlists during World War I, so both Mike Powers

and Michael Corleone choose to enlist as a symbol of their allegiance to the United States. Michael's choice to enlist defies his father's "express command" because Michael "performs those miracles for strangers" (Puzo 17). The "strangers" that Vito refers to are the American WASP citizens that Michael chooses to protect instead of applying his talents to protect his own family. Another way that Michael tries to assimilate into WASP culture is by making arrangements to marry Kay Adams, who is described as a "washed-out rag of an American girl" (Puzo 17). Because Puzo changes the 1930s convention and makes the retention of ethnic identity essential to being a gangster, Michael's decision to become engaged to Kay represents his strong stance against the family and its Sicilian ways. Their relationship is an example of what Werner Sollors calls melting-pot love, which is "[a] marital union or a love relationship across boundaries that are considered significant, and often in defiance of parental desires and old descent antagonisms . . ." (Beyond 72). Since Vito operates within American society but does not consider himself to be a part of it, Michael is violating the boundaries between the family and other citizens, and his decision to marry Kay disrupts the preservation of the Corleone family as a distinctly Sicilian one.

Although Michael does not identify himself as a Sicilian in his personal choices, the novel makes it clear that he is the best option to lead the family when Vito is no longer able, and that means that he must be reintroduced into the Sicilian ethnic ways that govern the family. Out of the three sons who are the possible heirs, Michael, the youngest, most resembles his father. He has "all the quiet force and intelligence of his great father, the born instinct to act in such a way that men had no recourse but to respect him" (Puzo 17). When Michael begins to take part in the family business, it is as an ethnic outsider. When wine and spaghetti are served during the discussions that occur after Vito is shot, "Michael watch[es] in amazement. He [doesn't] eat and

neither [does] Tom . . ." (Puzo 116). Michael's refusal to eat symbolizes his outsider status since Tom Hagen is not a Sicilian by blood, and he chooses not to eat the characteristically Sicilian food. This scene of Sicilian culture is "almost comical" to Michael, heightening his distance from the ethnic frame of the novel (Puzo 116). Another example of Michael's outsider status occurs when the news arrives of Luca Brasi's murder in the form of a dead fish wrapped in Brasi's bulletproof vest. Michael does not understand the symbolism of the items and states: "What the hell does that fish mean?" (Puzo 118). It is Tom Hagen who translates the message for Michael. Because he is not a Sicilian, Tom serves as a translator and enforcer of the novel's ethnic markers and rules (Messenger 114), especially for Michael until he rejoins the ethnicity of his family.

The tension between Michael's Sicilian heritage and his desire to be a WASP, as well as his lingering doubt about his decision to join the family, all come to a head during the "last supper" at the Luna Azure restaurant (Chiampi 27), a dinner which points to the religious significance of Christ's last supper and heightens the importance of the scene for Michael's transformation. While Sollozzo jabbers on, the narrator realistically describes Michael's state: "He could not understand a word the man was saying. It was literally gibberish to him" (Puzo 150). Not only are his nerves preventing him from understanding Sollozzo, the language barrier is also a hindrance for Michael. Sollozzo speaks in "rapid Sicilian" (Puzo 148) and Michael does not have an advanced knowledge of the language. Michael's nerves and his position outside of the ethnic frame do not permit him to understand Sollozzo's words completely.

It is when Michael flees to Sicily after the murders of Sollozzo and McCluskey that there is an indication that he is becoming what Sollors refers to as a "reborn ethnic . . ." (Beyond 32). It is in the country of his father's birth, the place his father is forced to flee, that Michael starts to

embrace his Sicilian ties, and thus becomes more like his father. Michael's relationship with Apollonia is significant because she is the opposite of Kay. Apollonia is a Sicilian, "a village girl, barely literate, with no idea of the world" (Puzo 340), whereas Kay is an intelligent city woman with a university education. Michael's attraction to Apollonia represents his new desire to be a Sicilian. Because he is entering the world of his father, a world that is Sicilian, Michael abandons his melting-pot love for Kay and pursues a woman that is a representative of his newfound circle.

Michael's relationship with Apollonia also reveals a conflict within him that is carried throughout the novel. Apollonia is symbolic of Sicily, however, Michael teaches her how to drive and speak English (Puzo 343) in preparation for Michael's return to America. Michael's intention is to turn her into an American wife, the type of wife he seeks in Kay. Although critics have missed this point, Apollonia is killed and thus not allowed to assimilate into American culture. This is a bold statement about Michael Corleone's attempt to assimilate, suggesting that he may meet the same fate if he continues his attempts to assimilate. The nature of assimilation is that it changes a person, and according to the novel, the change is undesirable. James Thomas Chiampi succinctly expresses the negative effect of assimilation, stating that "when one destroys the 'other,' one annihilates his own identity" (20). To Michael at the beginning of the novel, who desires to be all-American, the 'other' is the Sicilian; the 'other,' however, is also himself, an American of Sicilian heritage. As it is illustrated in the novel, to destroy the Sicilian in oneself is to destroy the future of the family (since it is tied to the very much Sicilian business), and it may also lead to literal self-destruction (as is the case with Apollonia). The death of Apollonia signals Michael's awakening to these facts; thus, it not until very late in the novel that he finally acknowledges his rebirth in the family, even though he has been carrying on the

Family's business for quite some time. Michael acknowledges his rebirth by stating: "Tell my father I wish to be his son" (Puzo 352). Through his statement, Michael simultaneously enters into the Corleone family and the Family business.

The ethnic frame of the novel is such that Michael is required to be reborn into the Sicilian ethnicity in order to take over as Corleone patriarch and leader of its business dealings in the wake of his father's deterioration. Since Puzo's gangsters are ethnic Sicilian gangsters, the Family business has an ethnic flavour that is integral to its operation. The nature of "Mafia style" is succinctly stated by Woltz when Tom Hagen approaches him about including Johnny Fontane in Woltz' next film. It is defined by Woltz as follows: "All olive oil and sweet talk when what you're really doing is making threats" (Puzo 61). What Woltz' statement reveals is that The Godfather contains a specific set of rules, or what Chris Messenger calls "Sicilian Rules of Order in performance" of Mafia business (114). Chiampi describes this performance as a "code of behavior that includes the kiss of death, ritual assassination, impeccable courtesy, and strong relations of kinship" (24), and all but the kiss of death are present in the novel. The "Sicilian Rules of Order" represent a "closed world of values . . . which can only infrequently be translated into American terms" (Chiampi 24), meaning that the Corleones' Sicilian world within America is protected from outsiders because of their inability to understand or translate the rules. For instance, to a non-Corleone, for example, the word "business" would call to mind the typical American meaning of the word, but to Vito and other Corleones, the word describes "both peasant cunning *and* standard business procedure" (emphasis added, Chiampi 24). The Corleones operate by a culturally-specific code, meaning that they can conduct business in a similar way to black language traditions, such as "Signifyin(g)," "far away from the eyes and ears of the outsiders, those who do not speak the language . . ." (Gates xxi).

The most important part of the "Sicilian Rules of Order" is what Messenger calls "*bella figura*." *Bella figura* is defined as "the attention to form of presentation governing social situations and the code that expresses an individual's public utterance and social script" (Nardini and Gardaphé qtd. in Messenger 113). *Bella figura* is similar to the black term of Signifyin(g), a "principle of language use . . . [that] is not in any way the exclusive province of black people . . ." (Gates 90). It is also similar in function to M. M. Bakhtin's double voicing, in which "the speaker wants the listener to hear the words as though they were spoken with 'quotation marks'" (Paryas 537). Whether it is referred to as *bella figura*, Signifyin(g), or double-voicing, the intention is the same. As the Corleones follow it, *bella figura* is the ability to "get the message," to deduce the "hidden meaning" of the script being performed (Messenger 113).

Vito strongly adheres to *bella figura* as evidenced in his conversation with Bonasera. Bonasera does not adhere to the Sicilian Rules, likening him to the Lion in the Signifying Monkey poems of black oral tradition, while Vito acts like the Monkey in his adherence to the Rules. Analyzing the conversation through an application of Gates' theory, Bonasera thinks that Vito, the Monkey, has "spoken literally when all along he has spoken figuratively. The Lion . . . fundamentally misunderstood the status of the Monkey's statements" (Gates 57). Bonasera has not shown the proper respect to his daughter's godmother, Vito's wife, and he has demonstrated a "lack of supplication . . . [by going] to the police [and] believ[ing] in the courts . . ." (Messenger 114). Both men realize that communication has broken down. Bonasera, with his lack of knowledge about *bella figura*, lets out a "despairing wail" (Puzo 32), while Vito in his intimate knowledge of and adherence to *bella figura* "turn[s] his back" (32). Bonasera finally adheres to the principle, and through his "correct ritualized response" (Messenger 115) is "reeducate[ed]" into *bella figura* (Messenger 114).

Michael employs the "Sicilian Rules of Order" very differently than his father and this is because when the novel opens, Michael is "not invested, not Sicilian, not in performance" (Messenger 118). Michael can both think and speak in violation of the "Sicilian Rules of Order," particularly of *bella figura*, as Messenger notes (118). At Connie's wedding, when Michael is carefully trying to explain the true nature of his father and family to Kay, the narrator states: "[T]he hell with it, he thought. He said, straight out . . ." (Puzo 24). Michael can be direct with Kay regarding the family's involvement the Mafia because he himself is not involved, and as such has nothing to hide. He even goes so far as to tell Kay that "his father is a Mafia chief who has to kill bad people . . ." (Puzo 120). While Michael is well aware of the "Sicilian Rules of Order," he feels no guilt about violating them because he is not involved in the family business. When Michael becomes a gangster and a reborn Sicilian, however, it is necessary for him to adhere to the "Sicilian Rules of Order" so he never speaks so openly with Kay again. After Connie blames Michael for her husband's murder, Kay confronts Michael to ask if the accusation is true. Michael replies: "'Of course it's not. Just believe me, this one time I'm letting you ask about my affairs, and I'm giving you an answer. It is not true.' He had never been more convincing" (Puzo 434). As part of the "Sicilian Rules of Order" Michael is required to deny his involvement in illegal activities through *omerta*, or the law of silence. His act as an honest, law-abiding husband is played perfectly and Kay believes him for the time being. Michael is now ready to fully accept his position as the next Godfather of the Corleone Family.

Masculinity

Building on the convention established in the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters, it is a requirement for the gangsters of The Godfather to have characteristics that align them with traditional notions

of masculinity. Both men and women are divided among gender lines in Puzo's novel: "[t]he women are women and the men are men" (Cawelti 340). What John G. Cawelti is hinting at is that the novel presents gender as a "natural sort of being" (Butler 33), meaning a being that is connected to the biological (and therefore natural) classification of sex. Cawelti means that the women in The Godfather are feminine and the men are masculine. The association between sex and gender falls apart, however, when Teresa De Lauretis explains that "gender is not sex, a state of nature, but the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which . . . is predicated on the *conceptual* and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes" (5). Built upon the notion of two distinct sexes, gender functions as a marker of boundaries: "one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender..." (Butler 22). To be masculine in The Godfather means to be not feminine. Johnny Fontane, for example, learns this lesson the hard way when Vito berates him for being emotional about his problems with his ex-wife. Vito exclaims: "You can start by acting like a man . . . LIKE A MAN! . . . By Christ in heaven, is it possible that you spent so much time in *my* presence and turned out no better than this?" (Puzo 36-37). The quotation illustrates that gender is a performance (Fontane must act like a man), and establishes Vito as the model of manliness in the novel, and an embodiment of the type of unquestionable masculinity that is present in the "Golden Trilogy" films.

As a masculine figure Michael cannot compare to his father or to the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters. Michael distances himself from his family through his choices in education, naval enlistment, and engagement to Kay. But far before Michael enrolls at Dartmouth College, he is alienated for another reason which affects his rise to the head of the Corleone Family: the narrator plants the suspicion that Michael is gay. Of his appearance, the narrator states: "His skin was a clear olive-brown that would have been called beautiful in a girl. He was handsome

in a delicate way. Indeed there had been a time when the Don had worried about his youngest son's masculinity. A worry that was put to rest when Michael Corleone became seventeen years old" (Puzo 16). The narrator implies that Michael is feminine in his appearance, and that he has sex with a woman when he is seventeen, meaning that he is starting to act like a heterosexual man and therefore a masculine man, the type of man that his father is through the entire novel. The questions surrounding Michael's sexuality lead to doubts about his abilities as a gangster. Francesco Mulas explains that Michael is "considered an outsider by everybody in his father's organization" (362). What Mulas does not reveal is that the gangsters inside and outside of the Corleone Family consider Michael to be an outsider because he is effeminate. Even after he kills Sollozzo and McCluskey, Clemenza thinks Michael is "too soft to be a Don" (Puzo 396), meaning that he still has not proven his masculinity. The word "soft" recalls similar discussions about masculinity as toughness in the "Golden Trilogy" films, toughness that needs to be proven through action. Michael proves his masculinity and his qualification as the new Don only when he becomes his nephew's godfather and follows through with the assassination of the heads of the Five Families.

Michael is not unaware of the whispers circulating about his masculinity. While the negotiations are being made to murder Sollozzo and McCluskey, Michael recognizes that he is "the sissy of the Corleone family" (Puzo 112). Sonny claims that the most important reason for Michael to be the person who kills the two men is because "they got him down as faggy" (Puzo 134), meaning that his attack would be unexpected of an effeminate man while the act itself would provide Michael with a means to act out in a masculine way to prove his heterosexuality. Tom Hagen refers to violence as an act that proves masculinity when he contemplates Bruno Tattaglia's death: "Maybe he [Sollozzo] thought we were soft, ready to be taken, because we

didn't strike back [after the attempt on the Don]. Now with one of the Tattaglia sons dead he knows we mean business" (Puzo 128). In this quotation, Hagen is expressing De Lauretis' notion that "the subject of . . . violence is always, by definition, masculine" (43); consequently, the Corleones emerge as masculine men through Michael's violent act of murder.

Violence in The Godfather is not the only way for a character to prove his masculinity. As Wini Breines and Linda Gordon define it, "violence is the sign of 'a power struggle for the *maintenance* of a certain kind of social order'" (qtd. in De Lauretis 34). In The Godfather, the power struggle serves to maintain a patriarchal order. Patriarchy, as defined by Heidi Hartmann, is the "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (qtd. in Sedgwick 3). The material base in The Godfather is wealth, a wealth that will enable the Corleones to eventually enter American society. The organization of the Mafia is hierarchical, with the Godfather assuming the top spot. As Hartmann articulates, however, all members of a hierarchy, such as the one found in the Mafia, have a common goal: the domination of women. To reformulate Cawelti's observation discussed at the beginning of this section, the men are men (read: masculine) because they dominate women, and they accomplish such domination through violence, which is, in the case of The Godfather, intra- and inter-Family violence.

Maintaining a patriarchal order requires that men have a certain type of relationship with one another in order to promote their own interests. The continuum describing all types of relationships among men is male homosocial desire, a "continuum between 'men-loving-men' and 'men-promoting-the-interests-of-men' . . ." (Sedgwick 3). Homosocial is defined as "social bonds between persons of the same sex" (1), and Sedgwick defines desire as "the affective or

social force . . . that shapes an important relationship" (2). Male homosocial desire is unique in comparison to female homosocial desire because "'obligatory heterosexuality' is built into male-dominated kinship systems, . . . [and] homophobia is a *necessary* consequence of such patriarchal institutions as heterosexual marriage" (emphasis original, Sedgwick 3). While men are encouraged to form social bonds with one another, they are forbidden from forming sexual bonds because such bonds are not only effeminate but counterproductive to the patriarchal system. The characters in The Godfather, then, are required to "cultivate the value of male friendships" (Torgovnick 338) in order to maintain the structure and power of the Mafia.

As the Corleone patriarch, Vito is required to be wary of Michael's sexual orientation due to the very nature of the patriarchal system. According to Gayle Rubin, "[t]he suppression of the homosexual component of human sexuality, and by corollary, the oppression of homosexuals, is . . . a product of the same system whose rules and relations oppress women" (qtd. in Sedgwick 3). The system of patriarchy is threatened by homosexuality since men who love men are, in a sense, outside of the patriarchal system because they do not have the domination of women as their goal. Vito, the novel's embodiment of the "Golden Trilogy's" portrayal of masculinity, is required to be threatened by his son's effeminacy as well as Fontane's, and feels compelled to call Fontane a "*finocchio* who . . . cries out like a woman" (Puzo 37). Finocchio is a derogatory Italian slang word for a homosexual. A Corleone cannot be a homosexual, so Vito is relieved after his son presumably has sex with a woman when he turns seventeen. Proving that he is a straight male, Michael can be his father's chosen heir because he can go on to marry and ensure the future of the patriarchy, and demonstrating his masculinity through the commission of violent acts means that Michael is qualified to be the next Don. Although his sexuality is questioned, Sonny states that Michael is "a Corleone after all . . ." (Puzo 133).

In contrast to Michael, Sonny never has to prove his heterosexuality and his masculinity is never questioned. He freely pursues sexual encounters outside of his marriage, and when he is first introduced in the novel he is making plans to have sex with Lucy Mancini, the maid of honour at his sister's wedding (Puzo 16). Throughout the novel, Sonny is identified as the Corleone son with a massive penis as in the narrator's statement that Sonny's "heart [is] admitted to be as big as his organ" (Puzo 16). Although Sonny is a heterosexual and his masculinity is not questioned in the way that Michael's is, the novel does suggest that Sonny is hyper-masculine and that his obsession with sex would not make him an ideal Godfather. Sonny is not guarded in his sexual interests in the way that his father is. Indeed, after the Sollozzo meeting during which Sonny speaks out of turn, Vito tells him that his "brain is going soft from all that comedy [he] play[s] with that young girl," Lucy Mancini (Puzo 75). Sonny's attention is being diverted from business matters (75), and his lack of control over his high sexual appetite places him in contrast to his father who keeps women at a distance. In the context of the novel, a hyper-masculine Godfather would be just as inappropriate as an effeminate one, meaning that it is imperative for Michael to model himself after his father, the model of masculinity, in order to be a successful Godfather.

Although Vito is established as the model of masculinity in The Godfather, looking at Puzo's inspiration in crafting the legendary Don Corleone reveals another side to the character. Vito is modeled after a woman: Puzo's mother. The character of Lucia Santa in Puzo's novel The Fortunate Pilgrim, published before The Godfather, is inspired by Puzo's mother, and Lucia Santa in turn is credited for the characterization of Vito. As Puzo explains, "whenever the Godfather opened his mouth, in [his] mind [he] heard the voice of [his] mother. [He] heard her wisdom, her ruthlessness, and her unconquerable love for her family and for life itself. . . .

without Lucia Santa, [he] could not have written *The Godfather* . . . " (qtd. in Messenger 131). The Corleone patriarch, then, has a distinctive feminine quality which is most evident in his dealings with supplicants, particularly Bonasera, as Messenger notes (203). Puzo's narrator even allows Vito to show a slight bit of emotion, a non-masculine characteristic, with regards to Sonny's murder in the presence of Bonasera: "For one fraction of a second the Don put out his hand to support himself against Bonasera's body. 'See how they have massacred my son,' he said" (Puzo 257). The men are connected in their pain over what has happened to their children, and each relies on the other, even for less than a second, for sympathy and help.

Once Michael proves his masculinity and also his worthiness as the Corleone Family heir, his relationships with women must change. As a young, college-educated Marine, Michael wants nothing more than to be like Kay Adams, an all-American WASP. However, when Michael becomes a gangster he emotionally separates himself from Kay because she is "the symbol of the values he has renounced" (Chiampi 29). The novel makes it clear that "Michael's move into the family requires his adopting the clan's distance from women" (Torgovnick 345), and one way that the distance manifests itself is through Michael's changing attitude towards sex. When Michael realizes that the assassination attempt on his father occurs while he is having sex with Kay, he feels "sick with guilt" (Puzo 79). When Michael returns from Sicily as a full member of the Family's Mafia activities, sex is not what it used to be: "Michael was rougher, more direct . . . [a]s if he were on guard against her" (Puzo 358). Michael develops the attitude towards women that his father has: although he is not described as "straitlaced" about sex like Vito is (Puzo 386), it is clear that Michael learns "feeling is dangerous" for a man in his position (Chiampi 26). He must keep his feelings to himself, an act that is constructed as masculine in the novel; therefore, he pushes Kay away out of sexual guilt and necessity as a future Mafia leader.

Success/American Dream

The "Golden Trilogy" films see the gangster attempting to attain the American Dream, and Puzo's gangsters follow suit. As the previous chapter outlines, the American Dream is not fully available to the gangster figure; it is not fully available to Puzo's Corleone family either. In the case of Vito, his plan to settle in New York and live the ideal life working to provide for his growing family is shattered by the corruption in his neighbourhood. He is quickly disillusioned about American life when he finds that circumstances force him to undertake criminal activities. As is the case in the "Golden Trilogy" films, Puzo's novel presents the fact that "[the] overwhelming mass of [foreigners are] law abiding in their own lands. If they [become] lawless here it must be largely due to the American atmosphere and conditions" (Adams qtd. in Bondanella 175). Such is the case with Vito, for he is not violent as a youth in Sicily. But his encounter with Don Fanucci forces him to break the law to survive. Don Fanucci uses his power to ensure that his nephew takes Vito's job at the Abbandando grocery store (Puzo 193). A desperate Vito, realizing that he must find work in order to support his family, goes "[a]gainst his better judgment" and joins up with Clemenza and Tessio who steal dresses off of trucks and sell them for personal profit (Puzo 196). Vito's well-being, then, is threatened by the same element that forces him to flee Sicily as a young boy and now forces him to steal for a living. Fran James Polek observes that "[i]n America . . . Vito found himself again oppressed by the same type of Sicilian criminal community" which is represented in America by Fanucci (64). Ironically, out of desperation, Vito is forced join this criminal community, the same community responsible for killing his father and brother in Sicily, to avoid socioeconomic oppression.

Even though Michael desperately tries to attain the American Dream through joining the Marines and assimilating into WASP culture by, among other things, attending an Ivy League

institution, he becomes disillusioned about the Dream, just like his father. After his father has been shot, Michael notices that the police and detectives guarding his father at the hospital are gone, illustrating that his prediction about Sollozzo making a move against the Family is true (Puzo 122). Encountering McCluskey outside, Michael is enlightened and asks: "How much is the Turk paying you to set up my father, Captain?" (Puzo 126). This is a significant moment for Michael because he "realizes that legal justice is merely an illusion . . ." (Chiampi 24). Michael becomes aware that American justice is not available to ethnic Americans, even those who do not identify themselves as such, like himself. This sobering realization leads Michael to begin siding with his father. In the hospital room Michael tells his father that "[he's there] so don't be afraid" (Puzo 123), meaning that he is physically present to aid in his father's protection, but also that he is coming to understand the circumstances in America that made it necessary for his father to become a gangster since he has encountered similar injustice.

Due to his disillusionment with the American Dream that occurs when he is a young man, Vito changes the type of success that he wants for the next Corleone generation. As a Sicilian immigrant who is denied the justice that is supposedly available to all Americans, Vito recognizes that a lack of power in the country leads to men being "puppets dancing on a string pulled by the men on high" (Puzo 290). Instead of being controlled by men like Fanucci, the puppeteer in the aforementioned metaphor, Vito has become a puppeteer in full control over his own life and the people who work for him. He is a "man on high" who controls the underlings that give their allegiance to him, and he wants future Corleones to be "*pezzonovanti*" (Puzo 290) too. The success of the family requires the perpetuation of the Mafia business that Vito started.

Michael, too, changes his views on what he wants for the family's future once he is a Godfather. However, his vision contrasts with that of his father. Michael tells Kay that "[his]

father's time is done. The things he did can no longer be done except with a great deal of risk. Whether [they] like it or not the Corleone Family has to join that society" (Puzo 363). Michael's ultimate wish is for the Corleones to abandon Vito's Mafia empire and partake of legitimate American work. In other words, he desires for future generations what he himself could not have due to unforeseen circumstances. Entry into America, however, is contingent upon the power which is gained from Mafia activities. Michael tells his wife that "[he'd] like [them] to join [American society] with plenty of [their] own power; that is, money and ownership of other valuables" (Puzo 363). In other words, reentry into legitimate American society will be based on a strong material foothold gained through illegitimate means. Michael alters Vito's assertion that "nothing's impossible here in America" to include the caveat that money and power are required (Puzo 290).

Although Michael becomes aware of the dangers of assimilation while in Sicily, and even becomes reborn into his Sicilian ethnicity while in Sicily in order to ensure the future of the Family business, his preparations for the Corleones' future entry into American society involves the assimilation that he badly desired for himself. The future that Michael envisions for the Family is not a Sicilian one. When Michael returns to New York he does marry Kay, and prefers that "the children . . . be [raised] Protestant, it [is] more American" (Puzo 439). In his children, Michael sees the potential for assimilation to be realized. What Michael sees for himself and his wife in the future is to be "part of some country club crowd, the good simple life of well-to-do Americans" (Puzo 361). Michael's desire to be a WASP persists, illustrating that his rebirth into the Sicilian ethnicity occurs only out of obligation to his father and his family, and is never something that he becomes comfortable with for himself. This desire also differentiates Michael

from his father because Vito does want future generations of the Corleone family to join American society but he never suggests that they lose their Sicilian ethnicity.

Gangster's Death

The death of the gangster, a convention of the "Golden Trilogy" that is discussed in the previous chapter, is a necessary occurrence as deterrence and punishment, and Puzo adapts this convention for The Godfather by including the death of Vito Corleone. Vito takes on fewer responsibilities as Michael assumes the role of Family patriarch. Vito remains only in a conciliatory role, and it is evident that his death is imminent because his interests change. The narrator describes the enjoyment that he now finds in tending to his garden: "The truth was, he loved tending his garden; he loved the sight of it early on a morning. It brought back his childhood in Sicily sixty years ago, brought it back without the terror, the sorrow of his own father's death" (Puzo 406). Vito is returning to his roots in the literal sense that he is planting a garden. More importantly, he is being transported back to his country of origin, the place where his family earned its living from working the land. Vito has a sense of peace in his garden, a peace that he does not have in Sicily because of his father's violent death (Puzo 192).

Although Vito spends most of his life in America, the importance of his ethnic Sicilian heritage is not abandoned. When he arrives in America, Vito changes his surname from Andolini to Corleone as a gesture of "sentiment" to "preserve some tie with his native village" (Puzo 192) and with the family he loses. Although Vito changes his surname out of sentimental feelings for his home village, the move also signals that Vito is changed from the moment that he becomes a Corleone since his homeland is a place of violence. Symbolically, Vito takes the violence with him to America when he changes his surname.

Although the convention of the gangster's death is borrowed by Puzo in his writing of The Godfather, he makes some notable changes to this important element. Unlike the death of gangsters in the "Golden Trilogy" films, Vito meets his death due to health reasons. There are no policemen in hot pursuit with blazing guns like there are in Little Caesar and Scarface, and no rival gangsters looking for revenge as seen in The Public Enemy. Vito dies of a heart attack (Puzo 407). He suffers a mild heart attack earlier in the novel (Puzo 403), but this heart attack is more serious as the narrator vividly describes the sensations that Vito feels just before he "pitche[s] forward into the earth" (407), symbolically planting Vito into American soil. Vito, a fighter until the end, has a keen ability to sense when his life is being threatened because "strange men have come to kill [him] ever since [he] was twelve years old" (Puzo 123). When Sollozzo's men attempted to kill him, he "knew immediately what was to happen" (Puzo 80) and tries to move out of the way. In his vegetable garden, his grandson appears as Vito is dying, and the sunlight surrounds the boy. Because Vito knows that "[d]eath hid behind that flaming yellow shield ready to pounce out on him" (Puzo 407), he makes sure that the boy moves away because he knows that he is about to die. He is determined to send his grandson inside so that the boy will avoid seeing his grandfather in the ultimate moment of weakness, fighting the only enemy that Vito cannot conquer for a second time.

Another convention that appears in early American gangster films is that the films' gangsters usually utter a few final words before they die, as is the case in Little Caesar and Scarface. Puzo adheres to this convention through the narrator's description of Vito's death. With his son Michael holding his hand, Vito looks at him a final time and triumphantly whispers: "Life is so beautiful" (Puzo 407). Michael interprets the statement as his father's declaration of self-confidence. At the funeral, Michael thinks to himself: "If I can believe in myself that much,

nothing else matters" (Puzo 409), and he decides to fully commit himself to following his father's footsteps. An interpretation of Vito's statement is subjective. The families of those who have been murdered by the Corleone Family would be shocked to hear such a statement, especially because it has been uttered by a Mafia boss. But Puzo does not intend for Vito's statement to be interpreted as pompous or selfish; from Vito's point of view, it is a testament to the success that he has had in taking care of his family in a country that is characterized as unwelcoming to ethnic immigrants. The basis for Vito's death scene is found in Sicily since Vito's death and final words are based on those of a real Sicilian gangster who is, according to Puzo, "Sicily's greatest Mafia chief": "A man responsible for a thousand murders and countless other crimes against his fellow man, he finally was betrayed by fate itself and lay dying of a heart attack. His loved ones gathered around to hear his last words, which were later repeated to the police by an informer. They were: 'How beautiful life is!'" (Puzo, Godfather Papers 189). Puzo's adaptation of a real Mafia chief's words and the relocation of his words to an American context provide a deeper meaning that stems from Vito's unique circumstances in America. As well, the fact that Vito has to face hardships after his relocation makes his success seem that much sweeter, and suggests that Vito's story can elevate him to American literature's "greatest Mafia chief," a recognition that would be impossible had Vito lived.

Real Life Connections

The previous chapter discusses the portrayal of historical occurrences in the "Golden Trilogy," such as Prohibition and the Great Depression. Especially significant are the allusions to gangster Al Capone in the films, allusions which are not lost on censors. Filmmakers play off of the notoriety of Capone in order to capture audience interest in their own films, and,

consequently, steps need to be taken in order to appease censors. Since Puzo adapts the conventions established in the "Golden Trilogy," it is only fitting that his novel contains elements of real life connections, particularly in the case of Vito. Interaction between the Corleones and historical gangster Al Capone is included by Puzo in order to lend mythic status to the characters of his fiction. Historical American gangsters are in their prime during Prohibition and the Great Depression. In order to heighten the legendary status and authenticity of Vito as a gangster, Puzo includes references to these occurrences and illustrates how Vito profits greatly from them. The narrator states that "[w]hen prohibition came to pass and alcohol [was] forbidden to be sold, Vito Corleone made the final step from a quite ordinary, somewhat ruthless businessman to a great Don in the world of criminal enterprise" (Puzo 211). His illegal activities during this time help Vito to expand his business and increase his revenue. Vito takes the trucks and manpower of his legal business, Genco Pura olive oil, and applies them to moving alcohol smuggled in from Canada by Italian bootleggers (Puzo 211). From a historical standpoint, the Volstead Act, which ushers in the era known as Prohibition, represents censorship that has as its target the working class, hyphenated American (Munby 32). Through the discussion of Vito's early years in America, the narrator tells us that Vito establishes his power through working against a government move which is targeted at people such as himself: lower class ethnic immigrants to America.

The Great Depression is another historical occurrence included in the novel, and like Prohibition, it has positive results for Vito. The narrator states that, during the Depression, "honest men begged for honest work in vain" (Puzo 213), and even sink so low as to accept charity from a "contemptuous officialdom" (213), a contempt directed towards the men's poverty and immigrant status. Vito's men, on the other hand, live like kings as they are proud,

rich and securely employed (213). Vito Corleone is now called Don Corleone (213) for his ability to care for those who are willing to be members of his flock. The narrator describes Don Corleone as both a king and a God for his abilities: "He was taking care of his world, his people. He had not failed those who depended on him and gave him the sweat of their brows, risked their freedom and their lives in his service" (213). Vito's employees can hold their heads high because they are earning money during the most difficult economic circumstances; in turn, Vito gains respect for hiring them, and is able to expand his enterprise during the Depression. The world that Puzo creates for Don Corleone illustrates that people cannot place their trust in America, especially during times of need, just as he could not as a newly arrived immigrant. He is always benevolent to those who are willing to become a part of his world, a world which is self-contained yet exists *within* the country of America.

The previous chapter describes Al Capone as America's most recognized, and perhaps successful, gangster. Just as the writers of the "Golden Trilogy" film Scarface include many elements of Capone's life in their film, Puzo includes Capone within the fiction of his novel. However, Puzo makes a significant change in his portrayal Capone as compared to the "Golden Trilogy" films. This historical Al Capone is easily transformed into a joke, a powerless man to be pitied, so that Vito can emerge as the most powerful gangster in America. In fact, Vito actually replaces the legend and status of Capone through Puzo's portrayal. Near the beginning of the novel, the narrator suggests that Vito is more powerful than Al Capone because Vito has "more political connections than Capone had ever had" (Puzo 138). But in the description of Vito's early years as a Mafioso, the ineptitude of Capone and his men is made explicit. Through his attempt to muscle in on the Capone-allied Maranzano operations, Vito reigns supreme over the Capones, whom he outdoes through "humiliation" (Puzo 217). The "stupid" Capones are no

match for Vito (Puzo 216). Al Capone himself is said to have "forfeited all political influence because of his public arrogance and the flaunting of his criminal wealth" and is "on the path to destruction" (Puzo 216). After the Corleone Family's violent killing of two men sent from Chicago by Capone, "[t]he Capones sent back word that they would not interfere" (Puzo 216), thus casting the Capones as weak and easily frightened. The Corleone Family wins the turf war of 1933, and through Puzo's alteration of a "Golden Trilogy" convention, Vito emerges as the most powerful, successful and recognizable gangster in America.

Religion

In the lives of 1930s film gangsters, religious faith has no particular significance. For example, one scene that has been previously discussed is one of very few that contains a religious element. Tony, a gangster in Little Caesar, agrees to start attending church again after a lengthy absence during which he joins up with Rico Bandello. Tony is shot while climbing the church steps because it is feared that he will confess to Father McNeil. The fact that Tony may be abandoning his gangland ways and turning back to God does not prevent him from being killed, much like Tom Powers in The Public Enemy. Tony's action does prevent him from being redeemed; thus, he is punished for trying to turn to a higher power than the gang leader. Religion is an element that is generally downplayed in the lives of 1930s film gangsters and when it is present it cannot come close to the power that the gangster possesses. Tony is punished by death for thinking that religion can save him. Although religion mostly has no relevance to the lives of 1930s film gangsters, it plays an integral part to the gangsters envisioned by Puzo and adapted by Coppola, and the role of religion in the construction of The Godfather gangsters will be analyzed.

One of Puzo's innovations to the construction of the gangster figure is his application of the title of "Godfather" to the gangster figure. This linkage between the Mafia Godfather and the religious position of godfather within the gangster is an original Puzo creation: "'The Godfather' was never, never used as a term for a gangster until [he] made it up. [He] thought of it in the same sense as we use 'uncle' and 'aunt' as a courtesy in the United States" (qtd. in Cowie 216). But the word, as it is employed in the novel as well as the film, is beyond a mere term of courtesy, although characters pass it off this way to conceal the truth. Explaining the position to Woltz, Tom Hagen employs the religious meaning and downplays the criminal meaning, saying it is a "very close, a very sacred religious relationship" (Puzo 60), to which Woltz bows respectfully. Hagen then emphasizes the paternal benefits of religious godfathers, since Vito is Johnny Fontane's godfather: "Italians have a little joke, that the world is so hard a man must have two fathers to look after him, and that's why they have godfathers" (60). While it is true that a religious godfather functions as a second father figure, having the word also refer to the head of a Mafia Family creates a complex layer of meaning in the terminology as well as the gangster figure.

While the title of "Godfather" is significant because of religious connotations, it is also significant for its connections to the parental role of a father. Cawelti notes that "[t]he book's very title ironically echoes the phrase 'God the father' . . ." (337). There are greedy motives in Vito's role as father figure. Vito seems to have the best intentions in mind, claiming to have a "sentimental weakness for [his] children . . ." (Puzo 74). However, this weakness comes out of greed for his own success and continuation of his empire. For example, he makes special arrangements for his son Michael's return from fighting overseas in World War II (Puzo 17), but it is clear that what looks like an act of protection for his son only occurs because he wants his

son to become involved in the Family business. After Michael completes college, Vito tells him to come and meet with him because Vito "[has] some plans [Michael] will like" (Puzo 44). The narrator makes it clear that Michael is the only son capable of taking over his father's place as family patriarch and head of the business, and Vito knows this so he uses his own son for his selfish purposes despite the fact that Michael has his own plans for his life. The narrator states that "[i]t was part of the Don's greatness that he profited from everything" (Puzo 19), illustrating not only Vito's business savvy, but also his omnipotence over his children. As a father, he profits from Michael's controlled return, since as a member of the flock the closer the son is to the father, the more control the father has over the son.

The religious connections between the Godfather role and its religious equivalent are evident throughout the novel, especially when Vito pays his respects to his former Consigliere, Genco Abbandando, and Abbandando, near death from cancer, makes an emotional plea out of fear of the afterlife: "'Godfather, Godfather,' he called out blindly, 'save me from death, I beg of you. My flesh is burning off my bones and I can feel the worms eating away my brain. Godfather, cure me, you have the power, dry the tears of my poor wife. In Corleone we played together as children and now will you let me die when I fear hell for my sins?'" (Puzo 46-7). Characterizing Vito as a God, Abbandando appeals to him to spare his life. Vito is a controller of the lives and, especially, deaths of countless people, and Abbandando is wishing to have his own life spared by this same man who he knows has such breadth of power. What is ironic about Abbandando's plea is that Vito has a role to play in the very sins that Abbandando fears will lead to an afterlife in hell by having appointed Abbandando as his Consigliere. Tom Hagen, Abbandando's replacement, recognizes the irony in "the Don helping those in misfortune whose misfortune he had partly created . . . perhaps because of the nature of the universe, the interlinking of good and

evil, natural of itself" (Puzo 389). Vito is an embodiment of all that is good and evil in the world, functioning as a benevolent God-like figure for his family and followers and also as a corrupt God who manipulates circumstances in order to have things work out in his favour.

The plea made by Abbandando is an appeal to the Sicilian tradition that a request cannot be refused on a daughter's wedding day since Connie Corleone is celebrating her marriage to Carlo Rizzi as the hospital scene occurs. The wedding occurring on the same day as Abbandando's request emphasizes the religious role of a saviour that Abbandando wants Vito to undertake for him. Vito admits that he does not have the power to save Abbandando, to which the dying man replies that the Godfather stay with him and "[p]erhaps if He [God] sees [him] near [Abbandando] He will be frightened and leave [Abbandando] in peace" (Puzo 47). Here, Vito is presented as one who can "negotiate affairs between humans and the supernatural" (Gardaphé, "Middle" 91), a sort of go-between for humans and their God. Vito functions as a Pope, God's representative on earth, but is characterized as more powerful than God since Abbandando thinks that God will feel threatened if Vito stands nearby. Vito not only functions as a God-like figure, but he replaces God as the almighty power. Vito himself believes God to be "that most foul and criminal traitor to man" (Puzo 47), even though God gives life and also takes it away just like Vito is asked to do. Vito sees God as a threat to his power over humanity, but Vito is a criminal traitor and also a threat, even to his own blood. His son Santino is killed because of his involvement in the Corleone Family's affairs. Sonny joins the business after he witnesses his father kill Don Fanucci (Puzo 218). The son whom Vito helps to create (as a God creates) is himself murdered for, at least partly, a violent act committed by his father.

Conclusion

Although Mario Puzo's novel, The Godfather, constructs the gangster by employing the conventions established in the "Golden Trilogy" films, the changes that he makes to the conventions create a very different type of gangster figure. The changes that Puzo makes are most evident in Michael, who must learn that the Corleone Family operates from a specifically Sicilian space, and he is required to be initiated into that space before he is accepted as the new Godfather. Michael is required to pledge his allegiance to his father Vito's world which operates within the country of America, and, consequently, he must shed the American markings that he has worked so hard to achieve as a conscious sign of alienation from his family. Because the gangster is envisioned as a masculine figure, it is also necessary for Michael to prove his masculinity and heterosexuality through the commission of violent acts and the changing of his relationships with women. An important difference between Michael and his father is that Michael enters the business against his will, and as such there is tension in his new role. This tension relates directly to Michael's unending desire to assimilate into WASP culture, and this desire translates into his vision for Corleones' future. Whereas Vito dies pleased with how he has ruled his world, Puzo indicates that Michael's inner conflicts will follow him far beyond the conclusion of the novel.

Chapter Three

"'That's my family . . . it's not me': The Gangster in Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather Films"

Introduction

Mario Puzo's novel holds closely to a number of the conventions that exist in the American "Golden Trilogy" and gangster films of the 1930s. He also makes significant changes to the conventions which alter the portrayal of the gangster figure, especially in his character of Michael Corleone, and introduces a new gangster—the Godfather. In adapting Puzo's novel into film, Francis Ford Coppola also stays close to the established conventions that Puzo draws on, but like Puzo, Coppola alters some of the conventions in order to portray the outcome of Michael Corleone's life that is suggested in the novel. Michael is very much a conflicted gangster, torn between the dream of an all-American life that he desires as a young man and the necessity of stepping up as the new leader of the Corleone Family. The resulting tension is evident in Coppola's films, where Michael takes the Family into new directions, and to other countries, in an attempt to legitimize it. Like the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters, Michael cannot ultimately succeed, and he must lose the family that he is obliged to protect in the wake of his father's death. There are a number of differences in Michael's character as he appears in the three films in comparison to the novel. Although Michael starts to abandon his melting-pot dreams in The Godfather (1972), his struggle to reconcile his own dreams with the success of the business change the ethnic identity of both the family and the business in The Godfather, Part II (1974). His seeking spiritual redemption in The Godfather, Part III (1990) illustrates that the religious

connotations of the word "Godfather" created by Puzo are brought to the forefront in Coppola's films.

Ethnicity

In Puzo's The Godfather, the characters are of Sicilian heritage, a heritage which is integral to the running of the Family business. In adapting Puzo's novel to the screen, Coppola's own Italian heritage "helped enormously" (qtd. in Farber 223) in visually including Italian elements in the films, especially in important ceremonies such as weddings where authentic foods are plentiful. All three Godfather films contain elements of Italian ethnicity. Significantly, the presentation of ethnicity changes throughout the films in order to address the transformations occurring from one film to the next, especially in Michael. Whereas Vito is the keeper of Italian traditions, Michael accepts, shuns, and finally returns to his ethnic roots throughout the course of the films. Michael cloaks himself in his ethnicity only when he sees fit, resulting in a different family and business life than the one seen in the first Godfather film where ethnicity is integral to the successful operation of both.

Vito is the patriarch of the family and the head of its business dealings. Under his command, both the family and the business have a noticeably Italian feel. Amerigo Bonasera utters the first speech of The Godfather to Vito, and it begins with the words "I believe in America." Bonasera's voice is noticeably accented, and his speech immediately colours the first Godfather film as a film about ethnic Americans, specifically those of Sicilian heritage. In "one of the most graceful camera movements in film history," Vito's outline is revealed after the shot dollies back from Bonasera, establishing Vito as the film's most powerful character (Silverstein 107). When the camera finally reveals Vito from the front, the audience sees a man whose physical

appearance and frequent, emphatic hand gestures suggest that he is operating from within the Italian culture. The juxtaposition of Vito Corleone, played by non-Sicilian actor Marlon Brando, playfully stroking a cat in his lap while Bonasera pleads with him to do murder (Malyszko 44) establishes Vito as a man with two sides. On the outside, he is a warm, friendly man who chooses to abide by Sicilian culture. On the inside, he is a violent, calculating man whose ethnicity is integral to his achievement of power by acquiescing to supplicants' demands much like Bonasera's.

The wedding scene that opens the first film continues to emphasize that Vito's family is an Italian family. Here, again, Coppola relies on his memory of events put on by Italians, particularly in the case of weddings (Farber 223), for the crafting of Connie Corleone's wedding to Carlo Rizzi. Connie collects envelopes of money in her bridal purse, men toss around sandwiches of Italian cold cuts, and the red wine flows aplenty. Jeffrey Chown describes Connie's wedding as relying heavily on "ethnic flavor, for instance the mother singing 'Che La Luna,' the father dancing with the bride, and so forth . . ." (106). The wedding guests are Italian, save for Kay Adams. Vito's son, Michael, is her date, and although he is Sicilian-American, he consciously chooses to alienate himself from his family's ethnic heritage. The opening sequence with Bonasera, as well as the wedding scene, emphasize that Vito is a gangster operating from a particularly ethnic space; as long as Vito is the family patriarch, the Corleones will adhere to Italian traditions.

Michael, played in the films by Al Pacino, is introduced as an ethnic character who desires to downplay his heritage. The decision to cast Pacino, who is of Italian heritage, emphasizes Michael's Italianness even though he chooses to exclude himself from his ethnic group. He is first seen wearing a Marines uniform and arriving at his sister's wedding with his WASP fiancée.

As in the novel, Michael's choice of education, enlistment and engagement as portrayed in the first film are conscious choices made to distance himself from his father and align himself instead with the promise of melting-pot America. For example, after explaining the story of what Luca Brasi did to help Johnny Fontane out of his contract, Michael tells Kay: "That's my family, Kay; it's not me" (Thomas, "Godfather" 17). The "not me" refers to his not being a gangster, not being part of the family (both of which are intimately connected), and consequently not being an Italian since both the business and the family are constructed as Italian institutions.

The relationship between Michael and his father Vito illustrates how Michael changes as an ethnic character. During the wedding scene, Vito observes his son through the blinds in the study as Michael moves among the guests. Michael is literally outside, since business is conducted inside the home. There is little interaction between father and son, and the interaction that does exist is strained because each does not approve of the other's lifestyle or choices. For example, in a deleted scene just after the wedding occurs, Michael walks away from his father after he observes that Michael's "Christmas ribbons" are the result of the miracles he performs for strangers ("Bonus"); in other words, Vito asserts that Michael is wasting his talent, which holds great potential for the family, and Michael's walking away indicates that he will continue to use the talents that earned him his medals to aid strangers.

When his father's life is threatened by assassins, however, it is the crisis itself as well as filial duty that draws Michael back to the family. As Richard Combs observes, Michael's conversion is "almost invisible" (42). Leaning over his father, Michael whispers: "I'm with you now. I'm with you . . ." (The Godfather), then lovingly strokes his father's hair and kisses his hand in the gesture of respect to his newly acknowledged Don, who smiles slightly as a tear runs out of his right eye. Michael's words have a double meaning because he is not only physically at his

father's side, but he is also stepping into his father's gangster lifestyle in order to protect his father and his family. From the moment that he whispers his new allegiance, Michael quickly falls in line and he is no longer seen wearing his Marine uniform, which is a vestige of his old alliances. Instead, he dresses in three-piece suits and often wears a hat. The change in vestments means that Michael's allegiance now lies with his father's Mafia exploits since he now appears as a professional, wealthy businessman.

With the transition into the family occurring in the hospital, Michael begins his journey back to the Italian roots of his father and his family. The transition may appear smooth on the surface, such as when Michael's steady hands light Enzo's cigarette outside of the hospital. His calm demeanour, especially in comparison with Enzo's shaky hands, indicates that his psychological state is not given away by his physical gestures (Thomson 79). He also appears confident at the moment when he clearly states he will kill Sollozzo and McCluskey, "emerging as a still, sure point of authority" (Murphy). In the restaurant scene, however, his confidence masks his crisis, which suggests that Michael is not completely sure about his decision to join the family. Judith Vogelsang rightly observes that the Sollozzo and McCluskey murders occurring in Louis' Italian-American Restaurant, which is a different name than the one appearing in the novel, is a "logical setting for Michael's dual loyalties" (125). Although he attempts to respond to Sollozzo in Italian, he stumbles, saying: "[*c*]*ome si diche* . . ." (Thomas, "Godfather" 36), which translates as "[h]ow do you say," indicating that he is reaching for the words to express himself in his father's tongue. Michael fails to communicate his thoughts in Italian, and must resort to English, illustrating that he hovers on the border where Italian and American meet. Right up until the moment he decides to commit himself fully to murdering the two men, from the pause in the bathroom to smooth his hair to the close-up on his face with his eyes darting around, it is unclear

whether or not Michael will do it. Coppola adds the sounds of a train squealing by, matching and intensifying the fear and doubt that is torturing Michael. Michael fires when the train sounds are at their loudest, indicating that he is able to conquer his doubt and fully commit himself to avenging the attempt on his father's life while simultaneously becoming a gangster. That the train and the bullets are phallic symbols and the train is also a sign of power represent Michael as proving his worthiness as a gangster through violence and masculinity.

Michael is reminiscent of the character Mike Powers in the "Golden Trilogy" film The Public Enemy. Powers enlists in the Marines during World War I, declaring: "When your country needs you, she needs you." Powers' dedication to his country, which is characterized as female, distinguishes him from his brother Tommy, who is a bootlegger and therefore, as the film suggests, unpatriotic and unmanly. Mike Powers also expresses a passion for education, leading Tommy to comment to a friend: "He's too busy going to school. He's learning how to be poor." Education, according to Tommy, is irrelevant during the times they live in since employment opportunities are scarce. In The Godfather, Sonny makes a similar comment to Michael after Michael announces his enlistment: "What'd you go to college to get stupid?" Sonny suggests that there are other, more worthwhile things that Michael can be doing, such as working for the family. His comments also imply that Michael is disloyal to his own family. The family is paralleled to the nation that requires protection. Because his brother refuses to protect the United States, Mike Powers expresses disdain for his brother's chosen bootleg lifestyle, just as Michael Corleone expresses similar feelings for his family's gangland activities when he is in Powers' role as a wartime patriot. What distinguishes Michael Corleone from Mike Powers is that Michael makes the transition from patriotic war hero to loyal gangster. Mike Powers remains patriotic to America for the entire film, but Michael Corleone abandons his patriotism to become

a gangster like Tommy Powers, with the difference being that Michael attempts to legitimize the gangster figure whereas Tommy never attempts to legitimize his undertakings.

The Godfather, Part II follows Michael through the 1950s as he attempts to expand the family's business empire into Cuba. In this film, Michael has altered the running of the business from an ethnic space to a multinational one. He is very much the non-ethnic businessman and resembles a stereotypical WASP, and has also acquired what Todd Berliner calls a "sterile, icy manner, like a stolid CEO" (113). The opening of the film indicates that the absence of Vito will be deeply felt by both the film's characters and the audience. There is a shot of the Don's chair with a noticeable impression in its back, which is the impression of Vito's body that Michael, as the new Godfather and new user of the chair, is obligated to fill. The chair is a symbol of Vito's power and also of his absence (Russo 276), both of which Michael must contend with. When Michael is sitting in a patio chair in Havana, a chair which is nothing like his father's in location or material, and symbolizes a worldlier and non-Italian gangster, he tells Fredo: "It's not easy to be a son, Fredo" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 88). Michael's statement indicates his difficulties in filling his father's absence which is indicated by the empty chair at the film's opening. His insecurities about joining the family that appear in the first film are a significant element of the second film, where he reverts back to the desire to live as a WASP. The empty chair is symbolic not only of the loss of ethnicity that occurs under Michael's rule, but also the shadow of his father that looms over Michael through the entire film and leads to increased tension about the direction he is taking the once Sicilian business.

Michael's desire to live as a WASP is evident in the family celebration that begins The Godfather, Part II and makes the film similar in structure to Coppola's first installment. With the exception of the flashback scenes, Part II is not borrowed from Puzo's novel but rather is new

material co-written by Puzo and Coppola. They write in a family celebration that is reminiscent of the wedding scene which opens the first film, but is completely different from the wedding in its ethnic framing. As Berliner observes, "Anthony's celebration has none of the familial feeling or ethnic flavor of Connie's wedding" (114). Missing is the Italian music of Connie's wedding, replaced by a boys' choir which is still in keeping with the religious affiliations that are depicted in the first film. Whereas Vito is visited by "respectful Italians" (Berliner 114) during the wedding, Michael is visited by Senator Geary, a man who could have stepped out of the "Golden Trilogy" films or the 1930s for his disdain of Italian people. Whereas Vito instills both fear and respect in his supplicants, Michael earns insults for his "oily hair" and "silk suits" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 69). In a reversal of roles, Michael is the supplicant because he is approaching Geary for a gaming license which the Senator will not provide easily because of his hatred of Italians, even though ironically Michael is at his least ethnic in Part II. The implication stemming from Geary's hatred is that assimilation, although required of ethnic immigrants in America, is impossible.

Although Michael tries to ignore his ethnicity, he has several critics. Frankie Pentangeli is the most outwardly critical of the direction that Michael is taking the family, although other characters such as Tom Hagen and Michael's wife Kay also voice their concerns. As a remnant of the gangsters from Vito's generation, Pentangeli represents the old world and its ethnic flair. At the communion celebration, it is Pentangeli who attempts to add an element of ethnicity by approaching the band and trying to make them play a tarantella, which is a traditional Italian song played at such occasions, with humorous results. Even the food is noticeably non-Italian, with dainty finger foods replacing the deli sandwiches. Chown points out that it is Pentangeli who mocks Michael for opting to drink champagne instead of the Italian red wine (106).

Another difference between the two films is in the ethnicity of the guests. Whereas Kay is the only WASP present at the wedding in the first film, the WASPs outnumber the Italians at the communion celebration in the second film. Both Connie and Fredo have taken up with blond people (106), whom Michael icily ignores even though he himself has married a WASP. His marrying Kay indicates that Michael continues to ignore his ethnicity and wants to be a part of melting-pot America.

Besides being approached by a hypocritical Senator, Michael's business dealings involve many other non-Italians. Pentangeli, the vestige of Vito's way of doing business, criticizes Michael for doing business with Hyman Roth, telling him: "[y]ou give your loyalty to a Jew before your own blood" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 73). Pentangeli recognizes that the family's business dealings have changed under Michael's leadership to now include a Jew as a potential business partner, a person that Michael's father "never trusted" (74). Michael alters another one of his father's traditions, which is the requirement that the Don be an Italian. Although his father broke the rules by having a non-Sicilian Consigliere, Michael takes the indiscretion further by giving that same man the most powerful position in the family. When his life is threatened, Michael tells Tom Hagen: "You're gonna be the Don . . . I give you complete power . . ." (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 75). This transfer of power is in contrast to the transfer that occurs in the first film. When Vito's life is in danger, it is Michael, his Sicilian-descendant son, who begins making the transition from college-educated war hero to Don. Whereas Vito has many loyal Italian followers including his muscle man Luca Brasi, Michael finds that Tom, a non-Italian, is the "only one [he] can completely trust" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 75), indicating that he has not only alienated some of the Italian people that worked for his father, but that he is distrustful of Italians because he does not want to be one himself. He wants the

business to be run from a non-Sicilian space, so he entrusts the safety and leadership of the business and the family to a non-Sicilian.

The Godfather, Part II is comprised of a parallel structure where the narrative of Vito's early years in Sicily and America is intercut with Michael's continued control and expansion of the Corleone empire. The film opens in Sicily during the funeral of young Vito's father. Vito's brother, Paolo, is murdered during the funeral. In another nod to real events, the shot, including the position and location of Paolo Andolini's body, is eerily similar to a photograph of Paolo Riccobono, "the last male member of the family and victim of a Mafia vendetta" (Lewis, photograph 16). In Part II, Vito is intended to be the last male victim of Don Francesco but he is bustled out of harm's way and sails to New York. Still another change is evident in this first Sicilian scene. Whereas in Puzo's novel Vito is aided by his mother in setting forth for America, the young Vito of the second film is an orphan when he leaves for America (Cowie 181). The loss of both parents, especially the violent death of the mother that is witnessed by the young boy, heightens the necessity for Vito to leave while also increasing the irony that the adult Vito recreates such violence, albeit out of necessity, in America.

In terms of visual characterization, the Sicilian sequences depicting Vito's early years are in contrast with Michael's sequences in Part II in order to depict some of the differences in father and son. Coppola employs "warm interiors" and a "red glow" for the Sicilian sequences and "cold blues" and "snow" for the sequences involving his son (Chown 106). Such visual choices suggest nostalgia for the past, specifically a past involving Vito. In the Sicilian sequences, evidence of Vito's values is found in the first words that Vito, played by Robert De Niro, speaks. When Abbandando comments on the beauty of a female actress that he is courting, Vito tells him: "To you, she's beautiful! For me, there's only my wife and son" (Thomas, "Godfather Part

II" 77). Vito places primacy on his family, and it is the desire to protect and provide for his family that leads him to what he sees as the only option: killing Fanucci. Coppola chooses to focus on Vito and what he does for his family, thereby leaving out much of the gruesome details of Vito's attempt to establish himself as a gangster that are evident in Puzo's novel. Emphasizing the Italian family, "Coppola essentially portrays young Vito as a modern day saint and absolves him of blame for the eventual failure of his Family" (Chown 104). That blame is placed squarely on Michael's shoulders. In the novel, Vito's sinister side and ability to manipulate situations to his advantage are the focus of the chapter describing his early years. He wants to hold a "monopoly" in the olive oil business, which is disastrous for local business owners (Puzo 210). The fact that Coppola omits Vito's manipulative beginnings and portrays him as a saint mean that Michael's punishment for destroying Vito's seemingly wholesome vision is more severe than if Vito would have been portrayed as partially culpable for the consequences of his actions.

The parallel structure of The Godfather, Part II highlights the differences between Vito's family and Michael's. For example, as Chown points out, there is only one scene in the film where Michael interacts with his son, Anthony (106), despite his fierce protection of the family unit and his declaration in Part III that "[he] spent [his] life protecting [his] FAMILY!" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Vito, on the other hand, spends a lot of time with his wife and children in Part II, especially with Michael. After he kills Fanucci during one of the Sicilian sequences, Vito heads home and holds the infant Michael in his arms, marveling at the tiny fingers, and says: "Michael, your father loves you very much" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 96). At the beginning of the final Sicilian sequence, Vito is seen holding Michael as the family arrives in Corleone. At the end of that sequence, after he kills the Don who murdered his mother, Vito

holds Michael in the train's window as it departs and says: "Michael, say good-bye" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 107). Although both father and son are departing Sicily together, it is the last time that Michael will ever experience such closeness with his family. Although Michael joins the family and adopts its values out of duty in the first film, his transition into the Italian way of life is short-lived. Under Michael's non-ethnic leadership, the Corleone family will never be what it is in the Sicilian sequences of Part II, signaling that his father's idyllic and Sicilian vision for the family and its future were buried with him when he died.

Analyzing Michael's interaction with his family in Part II reveals startling differences from his father's interaction with his young family in the Sicilian sequences. The differences are especially startling because of Michael's belief that he is running the Family for the benefit of his family. Whereas Vito is able to separate the personal family from the professional life of business, under his son's control there occurs "the inevitable collapsing of the personal and the professional in Michael's harsh treatment of the family in the name of economic power" (Man 121). There is very little interaction between Michael and his son, and no interaction between Michael and his daughter. For example, Michael goes so far as to have Tom Hagen do his Christmas shopping. To put on the appearance of an involved father, Michael asks Tom what the gift was "so [he'll] know" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 92). The motorized red car, a symbol of American capitalist industry and Michael's success in that industry, is "no gift at all" (May 72), since Michael has no involvement in its selection. The scene where Anthony's red car is buried in the snow is a "painful reminder to Michael of his absence from home" (May 72), and is especially telling because it occurs immediately after the scene where Vito expresses his love for baby Michael (Yates 162). Michael is unable to express such love for his family. When Michael does give a gift in Part II, it is not to his family. It is a two million dollar "investment" (Thomas,

"Godfather Part II" 87) on behalf of the Corleone Family to the President of Cuba for allowing them to expand their business empire into that country. That Michael can give a gift for a business deal but not to his own son indicates the degree to which the value placed on family has been skewed.

Michael's ultimate betrayal of the family comes when he orders the death of his own brother, Fredo. When Fredo is discovered to be the traitor in the family, the one who helped to arrange the assassination attempt on Michael, Michael must have him killed in order to preserve his power and the family. In a previous scene when Tom questions Michael's decisions, he responds as follows: "I don't feel I have to wipe everybody out, Tom. Just my enemies, that's all" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 108). Fredo is the traitor and therefore an enemy, but he is also family, blood. Because Michael has placed the success of the business over the family, he must have Fredo killed for violating the sanctity of both the business and the family. As John Krapp states, Michael "orders Fredo's murder to protect the Corleone family; but killing a brother is a direct assault on the ideal, and the very structure, of the family" (2). Ironically, then, Michael has protected the family and the business at the expense of his family. In his "final defense of family" he has its weakest member killed (Combs 42). In a previous scene where Michael is questioning the effect of his business dealings on his family, Mama Corleone reassures him: "[Y]ou can never lose your family" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 97). By the end of The Godfather, Part II, however, he has lost his baby and his brother, both by his own doing, as well as his mother. Michael's suspicion that it is possible to lose one's family is confirmed, illustrating the consequences of placing the business over the family instead of visualizing that one is integral to the flourishing of the other, like Vito did.

The Godfather, Part III appears sixteen years after Part II and it sees an aging Michael seeking redemption by returning to his roots, both in terms of ethnic affiliation and location. Especially noticeable is the return to ethnicity in Part III. "Golden Trilogy" gangsters, such as Tony Camonte of Scarface, are required to shed their ethnic markings, much like Michael does in The Godfather, Part II. In The Godfather, Part III, however, he reverts back to his Italian ethnicity which he embraced in the first film, thinking that his redemption lies in reconciliation with his Italian family and also with that part of himself that he has tried to suppress. Like the other two films, Part III opens with a celebration following a religious honour bestowed on Michael. He has apparently returned from his stint in Nevada and settled in an opulent home in New York City, the place where his father settled upon his arrival in America. At the celebration Connie leads the singing of an Italian song, taking on the role played by her mother at her own wedding in the first film, thereby suggesting she is now cast in the Italian matriarchal role. Unlike Part II, the guests at the party are mostly Italian, and so are the people that Michael sees in his office, much like the celebrations in the first film and the visitors to Vito's office. As well, Michael is elected the Meucci Association's Italian-American Man of the Year ("The Godfather, Part III"). Although the honour is as questionable as his receiving the honour of Saint Sebastian, it is significant because it means that Michael is accepting being identified as an American of Italian heritage.

Other evidence of his desire to return to his ethnic Italian roots is that Michael returns to Sicily, his family's homeland. Instead of hiding out there and learning about his roots as he did in the first film, or being seen in Sicily only as a young boy in a flashback in Part II, he undertakes a pilgrimage-like voyage to see his son perform in the opera, an activity that many American people characterize as being frequented by "mainly Italian peoples" (Roulston 99).

Michael is now comfortable with his Sicilian heritage, and his pride is evident in his desire to provide tickets for everyone to see the opera, saying: "I've been in New York too long" ("The Godfather, Part III"). As well, he is also proud to give Kay a personal tour of Sicily, saying: "I love this country" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Michael also chooses to live out his last days in Sicily, recalling his father's death in the garden and the connections to Vito's place of birth. Symbolically, Michael's death replants him in the country of his father's birth.

Michael is very much the family man in Part III in contrast with the previous film. The opening of the third film finds Michael writing a letter to his children, with Pacino's raspy voice-over saying: "My dear children" ("The Godfather, Part III"), emphasizing that Michael's desire is to develop and repair the strained relationship with his children. At this point in his life, he has come to realize that "[t]he only wealth in this world is children" ("The Godfather, Part III"), so there is a great deal of interaction between Michael, Anthony and Mary, which is absent in the previous films. This realization, as well as Michael's awareness that he is not the young man he used to be, means that Michael is urgently seeking to legitimize the Family, a goal he set out in the first Godfather film. Since the family and the business are intimately connected, Peter Cowie points out that Michael's goal is "also to reunite his Family and thus redeem himself" (154). A cyclical pattern is present since Michael is doing what Vito does in the earlier films.

In contrast with The Godfather Part II, Michael's business dealings are conducted with people of Italian heritage. Although he continues to have a non-Sicilian Consigliere, here named B. J. Harrison, the role of the next Don will not pass onto a non-Sicilian as it does for a time in Part II when Michael places Tom Hagen in the coveted position. Instead, Michael attempts to steer his son Anthony into the role by discouraging his music career. Anthony responds to his father's plans by saying: "I will always be your son. But I will never have anything to do with your

business" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Although Michael cannot differentiate between the two now that he is a gangster, this is an echo of Michael's own rejection of his own father's plans for his future in the Family business in the first film and therefore foreshadows the possibility of Anthony's eventual acquiescence. As well, there is a parallel between the relationship between Vito and Michael in the first film and Michael and Anthony in the third film, emphasizing that Michael should be sympathetic to his son. Although Michael does plan to stop all shady dealings, the wily Joey Zasa is not going to make it easy. Michael's reaction to the Zasa problem is to step back into the illegitimate world: "just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Michael proclaims his disgust for the gangster life he has led, saying: "All my life I wanted out. I wanted the family, out" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Like Michael did in a time of crisis in the first film, Vincent Mancini steps in, as he says, "to preserve the family" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Sonny's bastard son, Vincent, takes on the family name and replaces Michael as the next Don. Although Vincent is a Sicilian, he is not a legitimate member of the family, illustrating that Michael is straying from the traditions of the gangster lifestyle. As Krapp points out, "Michael may indeed 'make' Vincent a Corleone in name, but Michael's act does not make Vincent a full blood member of the Corleone biological family" (14). Vincent Mancini as the new Corleone Family Don suggests that Michael has again made a bad decision for the Family. Vincent is not only an illegitimate heir, he has his father's Hotspur-like temper and impatience which led to his father's violent death. Michael's intentions for his family may be honourable, but his choices for the family put the future in jeopardy just like Vito's choice to put Michael in charge.

Masculinity

The convention of the gangster operating from a particularly masculine space is adhered to in Coppola's films, and it is also where Coppola departs from Puzo is in his depiction of Michael. In the three Godfather films, there is no suspicion about Michael's heterosexuality nor is his masculinity questioned. As discussed in the previous chapter, in Puzo's novel Michael has to prove that he is not gay in order to gain the trust that he will be an appropriate Don for the Corleone Family. Significantly, Michael's relationship with Apollonia in the novel is characterized by violence and domination. When Michael visits the Vitelli home to see Apollonia, the narrator describes Michael's thoughts: "He understood for the first time the classical jealousy of the Italian male. He was at that moment ready to kill anyone who touched this girl, who tried to claim her, take her away from him . . . Nothing was going to stop him from owning this girl, possessing her, locking her in a house and keeping her prisoner only for himself" (Puzo 338). Patriarchy, which is necessary for the acquisition and maintenance of power in The Godfather, is described in the previous chapter as male relationships that "enable [men] to dominate women" (Hartmann qtd. in Sedgwick 3). Michael's relationships are similar in that the women are treated as possessions as well as symbols of America, in the case of Kay, and Sicily, in Apollonia's case. What makes Michael's relationship with Apollonia different from his relationship with Kay is the necessity for him to dominate Apollonia as a requirement for his new patriarchal role. Indeed, in the weeks after their wedding, Michael feels "masculine power" (Puzo 343), indicating that he is proving his masculinity and heterosexuality, and thereby his qualification as a gangster, by his near-enslavement of Apollonia. This violent characterization of his relationship with Apollonia is absent in The Godfather film because there

is no suggestion that Michael is gay so the need to prove his masculinity and heterosexuality is not as urgent.

Although there is a lack of violence in his marriage to Apollonia in the first film as compared to the novel, Michael does assert patriarchal power and its associated violence in his marriage to Kay. In The Godfather, Part II, Kay tells Michael that she is leaving him and taking their two children with her. Michael responds: "Do you expect me to let you go? Do you expect me to let you take my children from me? Don't you know me? Don't you know that that's an impossibility? That that could *never* happen? That I'd use all my power to keep something like that from happening. Don't you know that?" (Thomas, "Godfather, Part II" 105). As the patriarch, Michael's power comes from his domination of women so he cannot allow her to remove herself from his power. As well, the Corleone business is connected to the family. The Don is selected from a blood relation, and for this reason the children cannot be taken away. They must stay with the family in order to preserve it. When Kay reveals that their baby, a son, was lost through an abortion, not a miscarriage (105), Michael violently strikes her because she is threatening not only his patriarchal power but the future of the Corleone empire by aborting a potential future Don, *his* son, characterizing children and women as possessions.

Success/American Dream

Coppola follows Puzo's lead in making a statement about the gangster's futile attempt to succeed and fulfill the American Dream. If the three Godfather films are analyzed in chronological order, the success of the gangster in terms of attainment of wealth and status is visible. The Godfather, Part II is particularly effective in illustrating the rags-to-riches immigrant story that lures people like Vito to America. William Simon recognizes that the

"Family's 'progress' from first generation immigrants in New York's Little Italy to a home in the Long Island suburbs to total respectability on the West Cost (in this case, Nevada) corresponds to a quintessential American success story" (76-77). That Vito and Michael participate in consumerism on an unimaginable scale indicates that they have arrived. Whereas Vito has to struggle to feed his family in Little Italy in Part II (his wife's happiness when he brings home a pear indicates their level of poverty), he gains the ability to throw his daughter a lavish wedding as seen in the first film. Michael grows up among his father's wealth and, like his father, is intent on expanding the enterprise; thus, he gives a two million dollar "gift" to the Cuban president in Part II. What is different between father and son is that Vito shows off his wealth and shares it with his family through larger-than-life celebrations in the first film. In contrast, Michael uses his wealth to buy political power for himself by giving money to someone outside of the family in Part II, which is a more selfish and manipulative way of using his wealth as compared to his father.

Despite the gain of material wealth, Coppola's films follow Puzo's novel in indicating that there is another level of success to which Vito wants the family to aspire to. This higher level of success is what drives the collection of family wealth. Coppola retains the symbol of the hand holding marionette strings that emblazons Puzo's novel. In the novel, Vito addresses the heads of the Five Families and declares that all of them have "refused to be fools, who have refused to be puppets dancing on a string pulled by the men on high" (Puzo 290). In other words, these Mafiosi are in control of their own lives and their own destinies. They are not willing to come under the thumb of more successful Americans. In fact, they want the next generation of their families to "become the new *pezzonovanti*" (290), or what are known as big shots. The *pezzonovanti*, the ones who control the marionette strings, are people such as a governor,

President (290), or as Vito adds in the first film, a senator (Thomas, "Godfather" 54). The collection of wealth is a means to achieving *pezzonovanti* status.

Vito and Michael converse about this subject in the garden during a scene in the first film that does not appear in Puzo's novel. The shot is carefully framed, with Vito moving to sit in front of Michael and occupying the foreground of the shot. The characters appear to face each other, though there is distance between them, highlighting that the new generation Godfather is poised to replace the old. Vito laments that there "just wasn't enough time" for Michael to become a great leader (Thomas, "Godfather" 54). Puzo's novel contains more description of the process Vito has in place for cultivating such leaders, but Coppola still maintains the idea that supreme power is the ultimate goal. Just before the garden sequence, Michael, Kay and their son are in a car. Kay holds a marionette doll, one of her son's toys. The presence of this powerful symbol around Anthony indicates that leadership status is Michael's dream for his son, just as it was for Vito. In Part III this dream is shattered when an adult Anthony refuses to take part in the Family business, echoing Michael's refusal of the same role in the first film.

Another mention of the Corleones' American Dream of power and control is clearly articulated in the second film. When Michael and Hyman Roth are in Cuba discussing their partnership, Roth marvels that they are a very short distance from the United States and free to conduct business as they please. Roth muses: "Just one small step, looking for a man that wants to be President of the United States, and having the cash to make it possible" (Thomas, "Godfather, Part II" 87). What Roth means is that powerful political positions can be obtained if one has the cash to buy them. And with Michael's business ventures in Cuba, the Family is "one small step" closer to achieving the dream that Vito wanted for his son. As Roth tells Michael, "[they're] bigger than U. S. Steel" (Thomas, "Godfather, Part II" 87), meaning that their

partnership has allowed them to generate more money than the largest company in the United States. With this money, they are in a position to purchase the Presidency and turn a gangster into the ultimate marionette controller.

Gangster's Death

The conventions of the gangster film, established concretely by the "Golden Trilogy" films, demand that the gangster must die. Coppola follows Puzo's lead in having Vito die in The Godfather. As in Puzo's novel, Vito backs out of the family's business dealings, becoming a "retired grandfather figure" (Yates 159), as his son Michael replaces him. Vito finds solace in working in his vegetable garden just as his novel counterpart does. In the film, however, Coppola increases the interaction between grandfather and grandson. Many children of Italian parents recall watching an older relative cut notches out of an orange peel, which resembles false teeth when tucked under the lips. Vito makes himself these false teeth and chases Anthony, Michael's son, through the garden. The child is frightened by his grandfather's appearance, and "struggles with the same ambivalence experienced by the audience—the scary suggestion that a monster lurks after all behind the benign grandfather figure" (Clarens 279). The appearance of the Don as a figure to be feared matches the reality that he is a powerful gangster. While playing with the orange peel, the Don's laughs turn into a violent coughing fit, further illustrating the benevolent grandfather and threatening monster within the same body. What ultimately kills Vito is not an external threat of violence, but an internal attack. He collapses of a heart attack in his garden. Anthony, thinking the collapse is all part of the act, continues to laugh and play around his grandfather, ignorant of the impact that the patriarch's death will have on his future. Vito's death is significant for another reason. He dies outdoors, far from the inner domain of the

home and its business dealings. The location of his death matches his new role as an outsider of the family.

Unlike in Puzo's novel, there is no touching exchange between father and son. Vito dies in the presence of the future heir to the Corleone empire, not the present replacement that resisted working in the Family business. In contrast to Puzo's novel, and also to the "Golden Trilogy" films, the gangster in Coppola's film is not given any last words. As Ronald Bergan points out, Vito's death is followed swiftly by his funeral, "avoiding any conventional deathbed scene" (41). Vito's omnipotent power has been significantly reduced so he is not allowed the opportunity to assert himself a final time in the way that he does in Puzo's novel. He has become an old man who putters around the house feeding his fish. Yet, this absence of last words also cements his iconic behaviour of previous scenes, such as the opening scene where it is Bonasera who speaks and Vito who allows him to do so, indicating that it is Vito who is in the position of power. Although Michael is the focus of this project, it is Marlon Brando's immortal role that makes audiences remember his character over Al Pacino's, creating a parallel between the power of Brando's character and his skill as an actor in this particular role.

While Michael is making his transition into the leadership role in the family and the business, his father Vito is still alive. This fact is problematic because it means that there are two Godfathers in the first film, as there are in Puzo's novel. Even the other characters are confused as to who the true leader is. In one scene from the film, Tessio and Clemenza attempt to step over Michael and plead their case directly to his father. It is important to note that both men refer to Vito as "Don Corleone" and "Godfather," whereas they continue to call Michael by his civilian name, Mike (Thomas, "Godfather" 50-51). Tom Hagen reminds us in the Las Vegas scene that the Don is "semi-retired and Mike is in charge of the Family business now" (Thomas,

"Godfather" 53), and Michael wears the clothes representative of his new role even sits in his father's chair in the scene with Tessio and Clemenza. However, Michael has not yet proven himself worthy to sit in his father's chair as a Godfather, and while Vito is alive, whether semi-retired or not, Michael cannot fully assume the role as Godfather. As Vogelsang puts it, Vito is "in Michael's way because there can be only one Don to a family and the presence of the old man brings up a question of Michael's authority" (121). Only when the old Don dies can the new Don really prove himself as the next and only Corleone Family Don.

Puzo's novel and Coppola's first film follow the transformation from civilian to Godfather as the original Godfather gets on in age. Michael achieves his Godfather status as the novel closes, so he is not killed at the end of the novel or the movie. As a new Godfather, he has not committed enough crimes over a length of time to warrant punishment. One of the functions of the novel and first film is to reveal the tragedy that the Corleone Family business is doomed to continue despite Vito's absence, and that the new Godfather is the character that was most resistant to that role. In contrast to the "Golden Trilogy" films, there is no sense that Vito is killed as a punishment for his transgressions; rather, he becomes incapable of running the Family business as well as he once did, so he must die and pass on the torch to the younger generation of gangsters. Coppola continues the Corleone saga in the second and third films to illustrate Michael's rise in the criminal underworld. In the third film, Michael is an old man, and in contrast to his father's death, Michael's death serves as a punishment for his inability to ensure the protection and survival of the family and the business.

Michael suffers from diabetes in The Godfather, Part III, a physical manifestation of the inner conflicts that have plagued him since he decided to become an insider to the Family business in the first film. A comment by Al Pacino on the Bonus DVD that is packaged with the

three films is revealing: "I've always felt Michael had a kind of a disdain for gangsters . . . He wants to turn it back to the way it was before it all started . . . before he got into this kind of trouble" ("Bonus"). Michael's psychological self-hatred for his decision to become a gangster, and the choices he makes as one, leads to physical deterioration through diabetes (Man 125). Michael probably has Type 1 diabetes since he has a diabetic stroke and also requires daily insulin shots. This type of diabetes is "characterized by autoimmune destruction of the body's β-cells in the islets of Langerhans of the pancreas, destroying them or damaging them sufficiently to reduce insulin production" ("Diabetes mellitus"). The disease turns the person's defense mechanism against his or her own body, destroying healthy cells. The destructive process of the disease in Michael's body mirrors Michael's psychological torture about joining the family as a gangster. As his diabetes worsens, Michael's desire to bring the family into the legitimate world, the world where he himself wanted to live as a young man in the first film, becomes even more urgent. After his diabetic stroke he continues to sort out the Immobiliare deal against the advice of Don Altobello, who suggests that he "retire" ("The Godfather, Part III"). It is necessary for him to work out the deal because it will allow him a vast arena through which to launder his gang money (Cowie 178), thus absolving the sins he committed on behalf of his family.

Although it seems like Michael's plans for legitimacy and absolution may succeed since the new Pope, John Paul I, ratifies the Immobiliare deal, other gangsters want to prevent Michael from making the deal without them and, ultimately, redeeming himself. Even though other gangsters and assassins pose a threat, Michael will never be personally redeemed. After his confession, Cardinal Lamberto tells him: "Your life . . . could be redeemed, but I know that you don't believe that. You will not change" ("The Godfather, Part III"). Since a belief in redemption is required in order to be redeemed, it becomes known that Michael will never

achieve inner peace because he does not believe that it is ultimately possible. As William Malyszko states, "Michael is left with the one thing he cannot destroy: his guilt" (25). Also, redemption is out of Michael's reach because he has lost his family through the course of the films, beginning with his aborted child in Part II, Fredo's murder, which he commissioned, his divorce from Kay, and the shocking murder of his daughter, Mary. Although in Part III he asserts that he sacrificed his own life for the welfare of the family, under Michael's leadership the family has been destroyed. Michael is punished by having to watch its destruction and live with its consequences, "a fate," states Malyszko, "worse than death itself" (25). Michael's punishment is to live with what the family has become: incestuous, greedy and self-destructive.

The ending of The Godfather, Part III is significantly different from the screenplay. Originally, it is Michael who is supposed to die after the opera concludes, not Mary. In the screenplay, Michael picks up his granddaughter in front of a cathedral and subsequently collapses on the cathedral's steps. Had this ending appeared in the film, it would have been a nod to such early American gangster films as The Roaring Twenties where Eddie Bartlett collapses on church steps after being shot. The screenplay also would have allowed Michael to speak some final words. After his collapse, Kay asks Michael if he is dying, to which he responds "[n]o" (Puzo and Coppola, Godfather III Screenplay). Like his father in the novel and first film, Michael interacts with the future generation before he dies. His last word in the screenplay indicates that Michael is denying the reality that his life is ending as well as his family's way of life as it was run under his father's rule.

In the final version of Part III, it is not Michael that dies after the opera because that would not have been enough of a punishment for him. Coppola wanted to come up with an ending which, he states, "was worse for Michael than just dying" (qtd. in Phillips 140). After the opera,

Michael is struck by Mosca's gun, but it is Mary who is fatally hit and collapses on the stairs. In one of the most powerful moments in the film, Michael lets out a silent scream. Walter Murch tells us that Pacino is really screaming but in editing the sound was removed (xiii). After what feels like an eternity, the scream rings out, releasing the tension that has been built up through the silence (Murch xiii). Michael collapses, and the empty, anguish-filled expression on his face reveals that the witnessing of his daughter's death is the worst punishment he could ever receive. This is the true moment of Michael's death, for it is here that his soul dies. Connected to the death of Mary are the biblical connotations of her name: "the mother, the symbolic center of the family, and especially of young and future families" (Dika 102). With the death of Mary, the Corleone family is forever changed and the fate of future Corleones is uncertain. Michael has come to realize the importance of family, particularly children, in Part III as he acknowledges at the film's opening. But through his own mistakes he has lost the most valuable thing that he could ever have: his flesh and blood. The tragic end of both Mary and Michael is acknowledged by Connie, who covers her head with a veil after the scream, indicating that she is grieving not only for Mary but for her brother, and she is also continuing her role as matriarch of the family.

The silent scream signifies Michael's psychological death, but it is also necessary to portray his physical death as it is a convention of the gangster film. Parts II and III follow Michael's activities as a full-fledged gangster, so he has committed enough crimes (both legally and within the rules of the family) in order to receive due punishment which would have been inappropriate in the first film. After flashbacks of Michael dancing with Mary, Apollonia and Kay, flashbacks of the women he has lost, the film cuts to an elderly Michael sitting in a chair in Sicily. After a few moments, he collapses from the chair and falls to the ground, dead. In long shot, there is a dog seen sniffing at the body. Whereas Vito has his grandson Anthony, the family's future, with

him when he dies, there is no human presence with Michael. Since the death of Mary, Michael has had to suffer alone with his guilt, and he dies with his only companion being an animal, and a loyal species at that.

Real Life Connections

In adapting Puzo's novel to the medium of film, Coppola chooses to cut out a connection to a real, recognizable gangster that appears in the novel: Al Capone. In the wedding scene that opens The Godfather, Coppola keeps the conversation where Michael explains Luca Brasi's role in the Family to his WASP love interest and eventual wife, Kay. In the novel, and in the final cut of the film, Michael explains how his father, aided by Luca Brasi, intimidated Johnny Fontane's bandleader in order to allow Johnny to leave his contractual obligation. He tells Kay: "my father assured him [the bandleader] that either his brains or his signature—would be on the contract" (Thomas, "Godfather" 17). The screenplay, however, indicates that Michael was to tell a different story to Kay. The alternate story appears in the Bonus Materials that are packaged with the DVD versions of the films. Originally, it was intended for Michael to describe to Kay how his father overtook the business and status of Al Capone and his men by sending Luca Brasi after them. This story appears in Puzo's novel, where it is the narrator who describes the Corleone Family's run-in with the Capone Family of Chicago. In the screenplay, however, the story is displaced to Michael, whose storytelling emphasizes his desire to conceal the true business dealings of his family from Kay. He begins the story with classic tale-telling words: "Once upon a time" (Puzo and Coppola, Godfather Screenplay), then describes the disturbing bath towel incident between Brasi and Capone's men. Concealing the truth by shaping the event as a fairy tale is a technique that Michael uses to make Kay question whether the story and Vito's

identity as a gangster are real, or simply a tall tale meant to scare her away from the Corleones. The storytelling also avoids any consequences for Michael in revealing intimate facts about the reality of the business since fairy tales are considered fictional. In terms of Vito's characterization, eliminating the reference to Al Capone, which appears in the screenplay, and indeed eliminating the Capone references altogether, makes Vito lose his credibility in relation to real gangsters, a power that helped him to establish his legendary status in the novel.

Besides his omission of the Al Capone story, Coppola's omission of much of the description of Vito's early years as a gangster and the establishment of his Family during and after Prohibition leaves a narrative gap. Chown explains that "[i]n contrast to Puzo, Coppola in *both* films [I and II] never shows us how Vito made his fortune. Puzo made it very clear that there was a link between how the children eventually turned out and what their father did" (110). To be fair, there is a brief mention of Vito's early activities in Part II, where Hyman Roth describes to Michael how he made a fortune along with his father by "running molasses out of Havana" in the twenties (Thomas, "The Godfather, Part II" 87). However, the parallel structure of The Godfather, Part II is weakened because Coppola leaves out the establishing of the business which is integral to illustrating the consequences of Vito's business choices for his family, particularly Michael, who comes to take over control of the business.

Not only does some of the dialogue point back towards an earlier time in America, but the visual texture of the film does as well. Coppola filmed The Godfather as a period piece that opens just after the end of World War II. In order to lend the film an earlier feel, Coppola employs such visual cues as the newspaper headline shots during a montage that occurs just after Michael murders Sollozzo and McCluskey. Similar to the shot of pages being shot off of a calendar in Hawks' Scarface (1932), the newspaper headlines, as well as the actions of the

buttonmen and the music during the montage (which is played by Coppola's father, Carmine), indicate a condensing of events "in the manner popular in the twenties and thirties . . ." (Silverstein 111). The montage not only pays homage to the early gangster films, but it allows the mood of the audience to be lifted after the tense and visually gruesome murder scene.

Another real life connection to the "Golden Trilogy" films deals with censorship issues. When the "Golden Trilogy" films appear, the Production Code is in place but not enforced. However, filmmakers face pressure from censors and are forced to make alterations to their films in order to ensure their respective release. Although The Godfather is released after the Production Code is abandoned, its creators also face pressure due to some of its content. A number of Italian groups cause an uproar due to the film's portrayal of ethnic (Sicilian) gangsters. The pressure to appease such groups is evident during a 1977 television presentation of The Godfather and The Godfather, Part II in chronological order. Surprisingly, the presentation of the films contains a version of the Forewords which precede each of the "Golden Trilogy" films. These Forewords, as previously discussed, are meant to clarify for the audience that each respective film denounces rather than glorifies gangsters. In voice-overs during the television presentation of The Godfather chronology, there are sentiments expressed which echo Senator Geary's speech during Michael's hearing in Part II. David Thomson says: "On the first night, Talia Shire . . . appeared on camera—reportedly Coppola himself had declined this chore—to say that it would be 'grossly unfair' to let the Corleones represent all Italians. . . . Titles also announced that, despite bloodiness and the ostensibly favourable portrait of the gangsters, this was actually a study of 'the self-destructive effects of crime and violence'" (79). Similarly to the Forewords to the "Golden Trilogy" films, the voice-overs direct the audience as to how they should feel about the gangsters in The Godfather chronology, and the connection

made between Italians and gangsters in particular. They are also reminiscent of what Geary says during the senate hearing: "these hearings on the Mafia are in no way whatsoever a slur upon the great Italian people" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 100). Films such as the three Godfather installments do contribute to the stereotype of Italians as gangsters. However, having the voice-over echo the thoughts of a Senator who relies on Italian gangsters for his continued status and reputation undermines the intention of the voice-overs.

The Senate investigation of Michael Corleone that appears in The Godfather, Part II is another element that Coppola has borrowed from real occurrences. Chown states that "[t]he crime committee investigation of Michael is closely modeled on the Kefauver investigation of organized crime in the 1950s" (108). Although the investigation does come to a halt in the film, this real life comparison in the case of Michael is telling. Whereas Vito is compared to Al Capone in Puzo's novel and in a deleted scene from the first film in order to illustrate his power and credibility, Michael is involved in a criminal investigation that is linked to real hearings, illustrating the degeneration of the Corleone family. The business that his father created in order to ensure the protection and survival of the family is being exposed to the public as a criminal empire, leaving the family vulnerable and Michael facing possible indictment. Michael's trouble with the law is a sign that he is running the business differently than his father since Vito never faces criminal charges in the films. That the family and the business are being infiltrated by people who Michael is supposed to defend them from suggests that the "Sicilian Rules of Order" discussed in the previous chapter are of less importance to him in comparison to his father. The Rules no longer represent a "closed world of values" (Chiampi 24) because the investigators are becoming educated about the intimate details of the Corleone operations. Under Michael's

leadership, the secrecy that is vital to the existence of the business and the family has been breached.

Religion

Religion plays a major role in the three Godfather films. It makes the films unique in comparison to the "Golden Trilogy" films, which have virtually no religious elements. In Little Caesar, Tony's mother, who represents the typical wholesome ethnic Italian mother, laments to her son: "You used to be a good boy, Antonio. Used to sing in Father McNeil's choir." Tony is murdered on the steps of Father McNeil's church because it is feared that his possible confession will lead to trouble for the Rico Bandello and his men. The film implies that religion is not of major concern for gangsters of the "Golden Trilogy," and that for those who are religious, their church cannot protect them. They are denied acceptance into the church just as they are denied entrance into American society. In the Godfather films, religion permeates both business and family life. Coppola expresses that the presence of religious ceremonies in the film result from his own experiences with his Italian background: "I made a very conscious decision. I wanted to get all the Catholic rituals into the film . . . I knew all the details" (qtd. in Farber 223). Coppola's assertion explains that his own Catholic background is meant to lend an air of authenticity to the portrayal of both Italians and the Catholic religion.

Drawing a connection between religious godfathers and Mafia leaders as Godfathers elicits a connection between religion and violence. According to Bryan P. Stone, "religion . . . typically serves either as a force for justifying and legitimating violence or as a device for enhancing the entertainment value of violence" (paragraph 1). Religion serves both functions in Coppola's films. In the novel, no religious ceremony occurs during the killing of Fanucci: the street is

"deserted" as Vito makes his way to Fanucci's apartment (Puzo 203). In the corresponding scene in Part II, however, Vito earns his title of Godfather when he murders Fanucci during a religious ceremony, where scenes of Vito stalking his prey from the rooftops are intercut with the celebration below. Similarly, in a montage from the first film, Michael simultaneously becomes a Mafia Godfather while also earning the religious title. In Puzo's novel, the baptism of Connie and Carlo's baby is treated in one paragraph, with no details about the ceremony. The murders of the heads of the Five Families occur subsequently. In adapting the novel to the screen, Coppola includes the baptism scene in all of its details, and it is intercut with the assassinations.

Although the montage sets up a clear contrast between the two activities occurring, the intention is to suggest "the inextricable relations between the activities . . ." (Simon 86). It is during the montage that Michael earns the full title of Godfather, with its religious and secular connotations. As the tension builds, the music intensifies and the baby's cries are heard. The priest asks Michael the three questions that are to be asked of him as the child's representative during the sacrament: "Michael Francis Rizzi—do you renounce Satan? . . . And all his works? . . . And all his pomps?" (Thomas, "Godfather" 57-58). During the question and answer period, the shot moves back and forth between the action within the church and the action outside of it. A shot of Michael's expressionless face as he responds to each of the three questions cuts to each of the assassinations. The montage emphasizes that not only are Michael's vows empty, but it establishes agency: Michael is responsible for ordering the killings (Simon 87). The montage also establishes a concurrent baptism: Michael not only becomes the child's godfather, but he is also "baptized" or initiated into the position of Godfather for the Corleone Family. Vogelsang makes the connection between this double baptism: "The child is baptized with holy water as Michael is baptized by the blood of his victims. The circle is complete, his American and Italian,

water and wine elements are integrated into the new godfather" (134). For Michael, and also for his father Vito, to be a gangster leader means to be a business leader as well as a paternal protector, and the Corleones see no discrepancy about the duality of the role. The roles are integral to one another.

Other rituals are performed in the films which establish a connection between religion and the role of a Mafia Godfather. There are actions undertaken to show respect for the position of Godfather. In The Godfather, men bow reverently to the Godfather when they leave the room or after they have been granted a "favour." Men also kiss the hand of a Godfather as a sign of respect, imitating the way Catholics kiss the ring of a Pope. Such an action makes the Godfather equivalent to the Pope of the Mafia. Only men who have been initiated as a Godfather can be kissed on the hand; thus, after the baptism sequence in the first film, Michael offers his hand to be kissed by Clemenza and others who now refer to him as "Don Corleone" (Thomas, Godfather 61) and offer their allegiance through the kiss. Vincent Mancini offers his hand to be kissed in Part III after Michael makes him the new Godfather and changes Vincent's last name to Corleone. In The Godfather, Part II, Connie kneels in front of Michael and tells him: "You need me, Michael. I want to take care of you now" (Thomas, "Godfather Part II" 107). When Michael caresses her cheek, she takes his hand and places her forehead on it in a movement that expresses her newfound allegiance and respect for her brother and his position. In The Godfather, Part III, Connie's allegiance is even stronger as she orders the murder of Joey Zasa, taking on a Godfather-type role in the place of her ailing brother.

The gangster as godfather possesses far-reaching power, a power that has religious connotations. According to Alessandro Camon, the Godfather plays a similar role to that of a parent in that both roles have power over life and death (65). Both Vito and Michael have the

ability to give life and to take it away in an instant if it will ensure the protection and livelihood of the family, thus connecting both characters to the divine. Even blood relatives are susceptible to murder if they are perceived as a threat. Fredo falls victim to Michael's ruthlessness in Part II because Fredo has become a family traitor for business purposes. Blood relatives are not immune from death when the family and the business are so tightly linked. Michael's purpose is to protect his family and ensure its survival. Significantly, he is named after an Archangel of God whose duty is to protect God's followers from Satan (Holweck). As the head of his flock, Michael has to protect it by any means possible.

Conclusion

Comparing the depiction of Michael and Vito Corleone in Puzo's novel to Coppola's films reveals that the author and director adhere to the use of the genre's conventions, and both Puzo and Coppola alter the conventions resulting in the creation of a different gangster figure. The changes are significant in the case of Michael Corleone, for he is uncannily similar Mike Powers in the "Golden Trilogy" film The Public Enemy in many ways. However, he is also a world away from early American film gangsters because of the tension associated with his new role as a Godfather. Like his father, Michael wants the best for the business and the family, but he sees a different, less Sicilian path to success as compared to his father. For Michael, future survival depends on undertaking specific preparations to one day enter American society. One of those preparations, according to Michael, requires the legitimization of the business. Coppola's films suggest that Michael's dream is not possible and, further, that it is not desirable. Characters lament that things have changed under Michael's leadership in comparison to Vito's. The Sicilian flavour, among other things, is lacking. The ethnicity of the family and the business

return in Coppola's last film as Michael approaches the end of his life. However, it is too late for Michael to undo the damage that he has done, and he must live out the end of his days in the nightmare that he has created. It is this struggle between idyllic dream and terrifying nightmare that continues to bring critical attention to and leisurely interest in not only the characters of The Godfather, but the gangster figure in general.

Afterword

"The Godfather: An Offer you STILL Can't Refuse"

Reminiscent of Sonny's body repeatedly pierced by assassins' bullets, the media has been bombarding voracious consumers with images of the gangster since the 1930s, and the examples are unlikely to lessen anytime soon. The new gangsters, such as the ones envisioned by Puzo and Coppola, testify not only to the power of and interest in early gangster films themselves, but the gangster myth in general. Even mild fans of the Corleone dynasty can pick up on the plethora of allusions to The Godfather films in contemporary texts. Even the world of frozen treats nods to The Godfather through a "Ben & Jerry's" ice cream flavour named "The Gobfather!" Many of the references to The Godfather films serve to perpetuate the construction of the gangster figure, while others poke fun at memorable characters or key lines due to their legendary status and popularity. Still, other examples illustrate that the gangster continues to evolve in the American media, and in many ways the modern gangster is very different from its early film counterpart. Gangsters such as Rico Bandello (Little Caesar, 1931), Vito Corleone (The Godfather, 1972) and The Sopranos' Tony Soprano showcase the conventions of the genre, but in each characterization the conventions are altered so that each gangster resembles the previous one less and less. The implications of the changes indicate that the construction, relevance and popularity of the gangster figure adapt with the times.

Many post-Godfather films parody Marlon Brando's performance as Vito Corleone, testifying to his powerful and memorable portrayal of the aging Don. For instance, when Irwin M. Fletcher is caught at gunpoint while doing some investigating in Fletch (1985), to protect his identity he calls himself Don Corleone, adding: "Moe Greene is out of the Tropicana. My sons

Mike and Fredo are taking over." Fletch escapes unharmed because the man has evidently not seen or read The Godfather, and the audience has a hearty laugh at his ignorance. Fletch looks nothing like Vito Corleone, and Vito would never reveal such precise business dealings to a person outside of the Family. Marlon Brando's character is also imitated for comic effect in Robin Hood: Men in Tights (1993). Don Giovanni, played by Dom DeLuise, is called in from New Jersey for Prince John's aid. He strokes a plastic lizard which poops on him, and has trouble speaking because, as he explains, "[he] just got back from the dentist and they left in the cotton balls." His comment is a nod to the distinct appearance and voice Brando employs for Vito Corleone with the use of tissues stuffed in his cheeks for his audition ("Bonus"), and, during filming, with dental devices. The less-than-intelligent Don Giovanni also breaks the Sicilian Rules of Order to describe what will be done about Robin Hood: "Alright, you want plain English? Robin is gonna be dead, d-e-d, dead." The film bends the strict rules of *bella figura* that are vital for the operation of the Corleone Family by having the Don speak so openly about his family business.

Other examples of humour and spoofs of the Corleones abound. In "Last Exit to Springfield" (9F15), Homer Simpson imagines what a life in the criminal underworld would be like. He pictures himself as Don Fanucci, donning the white suit and fedora and strolling the streets of New York's Little Italy, parodying the scene from The Godfather, Part II. Homer visits the street vendors and, in typical Homer fashion, takes a doughnut from one, commenting: "That's-a nice-a doughnut." His mock Italian accent, which none of the Corleones have, emphasizes that Homer's idea of underworld criminals is comprised of Italian-Americans, specifically the ones that appear in The Godfather films. Even his wife Marge becomes a gangster in "Strong Arm of the Ma" (EABF04), specifically taking on the role of Sonny Corleone in the first Godfather film.

Marge confronts the man who mugs her and the scene unfolds similarly to the Sonny-Carlo brawl in the streets. This episode implies that Marge can stand up to her attacker only after she takes on a masculine role; she begins bodybuilding and becomes the sexual aggressor in her marital relationship, thus affirming that masculinity is a necessary performance for gangsters. Besides the Simpson parents, there is a staple character representing the underworld, "Fat Tony" D'Amico (voiced by Joe Mantegna who starred as Joey Zasa in The Godfather, Part III), who has a raspy voice like Marlon Brando's character in The Godfather films and participates in shady dealings, again reinforcing the stereotype of gangsters as Italian-Americans and the intertextuality of the Godfather films.

Perhaps the most important change that has occurred in the construction of the gangster in American culture since the appearance of The Godfather is that many gangsters since that film display self-awareness. To put it in another way, many modern gangsters continue to recognize themselves as outsiders in American society. For example, in Brian De Palma's 1983 remake of Howard Hawks' Scarface, Tony Montana, played by Al Pacino, stumbles out of a swanky restaurant, obviously high on cocaine. As the (mostly) white patrons gawk at him stumbling around, Pacino, as Montana, delivers an important speech: "You need people like me so you can point your fucking fingers and say, 'That's the bad guy.' So what does that make you? Good?" Montana is keenly aware of the role that gangsters play in shaping law-abiding American citizens; citizens should strive to be the opposite of Montana. Such messages are obvious in the Forewords to the "Golden Trilogy" films, but are not particularly noticed by the gangsters within those films. The Godfather arguably represents a rebirth of the gangster, and the gangsters that follow the Corleones continue to be quite different from them. As Tony Montana says, "say 'good night' to the bad guy . . . last time you're gonna see a bad guy like this again, lemmie tell

you." And Tony Montana is right: modern gangsters are, in many ways, as far from Montana and the Corleones as they can be.

A number of post-Godfather gangsters are crafted specifically as a response to Puzo and Coppola's Corleone clan. For example, Goodfellas (1990) follows gangster Henry Hill who is based on a real American gangster of the same name. Martin Scorsese's intentions are different from Coppola's: "he sets about to attack a number of myths about mobsters in general and Italian American Wise Guys . . . in particular" (Bondanella 272). Whereas Puzo and Coppola present a sweeping epic story that romanticizes the gangster lifestyle, Scorsese presents a gritty and more realistic portrait of gangsters and their activities. As Gilberto Perez points out, "[h]ere the drive for success just means the pursuit of money. Here the will to power just means the cheap superiority of not having to wait in line for a table at the Copa. This is the "gangster as comic hero" or the opposite of Robert Warshow's seminal gangster as tragic hero, a Michael Corleone-type hero (Bondanella 190). Henry Hill indulges in drugs, sex and material luxuries. Whereas Michael Corleone carries the burden of his choices as a gangster, specifically ordering the murder of his brother Fredo, in his stooped and aged frame in The Godfather, Part III, Henry Hill has no such feelings when he has to testify against fellow gang members. Instead, Hill laments his loss of accumulated wealth, possessions and power. This difference is because there is no strong sense of Mafia Family in Scorsese's film: "it is the mobster's 'crew' that matters—the men gathered around him regardless of ethnic origin who can become 'good earners'" (Bondanella 273). Scorsese's gangsters are not required to be related by blood, nor do the Family and business fit together as tightly as they do in Puzo's and Coppola's texts; thus, the connection between business and family has broken down in Goodfellas and replaced with male friendship.

Another important post-Godfather film that portrays the gangster in a non-romantic way is Mike Newell's Donnie Brasco (1997), starring Al Pacino as an aging mobster and Johnny Depp as the undercover cop who infiltrates his mob. Based on a true story, the film follows FBI agent Joseph Pistone, alias Brasco, as he collects information on "Lefty" (Pacino) and others and eventually starts thinking and acting like a real gangster himself. The touching friendship between the endearing Lefty and Brasco adds a sad note to the eventual bust of the mob and Lefty's suicide. Although the film follows Pacino as a very different (poor, self-conscious, even pitiful) gangster than his Michael Corleone, Donnie Brasco revisits a theme from earlier gangster films: the "bad-wop-good-wop-cop" theme which Peter E. Bondanella defines as "a practice of pairing a criminal ethnic character with an admirable ethnic character as the law-enforcement officer who hunts him down" (179). Pacino himself helps to depict a version of this theme on film when, following his portrayal of an Italian gangster in The Godfather, he plays an Italian-American on the other side of the law as a police officer in Serpico (1973). The intention of the theme is to diversify the portrayal of ethnicity on the screen and illustrate that members of an ethnic group, especially Italians, known to be represented as criminal can also be productive law-abiding members of society. In order to be portrayed as such, they must help to clean up the streets of characters from their own ethnic group. Thus, films like Donnie Brasco break down gangster film stereotypes while at the same time perpetuating them.

A well-known contemporary take on Italian-American gangsters can be found on television in David Chase's drama The Sopranos. The series holds a large fan-following because of its gritty portrayal of Tony Soprano and his fellow mobsters. Tony Soprano follows as a response to Puzo and Coppola's Corleone characters. In fact, Tony and his men often quote from the Godfather films and debate their merits, emphasizing the Corleone Family as a romantic and therefore

fictional account of the mob in order to highlight the apparently more realistic portrayal found in the series. Cleverly, the "Bonus Materials" DVD packaged with The Godfather DVD Collection contains a scene from the television series in which Tony and the gang attempt to watch a bootleg copy of one of The Godfather films. Tony says that his favourite scene is the Sicily sequence at Don Cicci's village in Part II, which is significant since Vito Corleone and Tony Soprano go together like Frankie Pentangeli and champagne cocktails.

Whereas Michael Corleone may display doubt about his chosen lifestyle but still keep everything together and forge ahead for the sake of his family, Tony Soprano's problems are at the forefront of his personal and professional life. Tony succumbs to work and family pressures and seeks help from psychiatrist Dr. Melfi for anxiety attacks. While Tony may reveal "fears and unconscious displeasure" with his life, he must hide the doctor visits from everyone for fear of appearing vulnerable, and therefore effeminate (Baker and Vitullo 223). Gangster Paul Vitti, played by Robert De Niro in Analyze This (1999), as well as Tony Soprano "express their misgivings about the pressures and costs of an individualized, hypercompetitive white masculinity like that pursued in the earlier cycle" of American gangster films (Baker and Vitullo 223). In other words, Soprano and Vitti still uphold the masculine ideal required of them in order to be gangsters, but at the same time they question the validity of this ideal. It is their questioning of masculinity that sets them apart from the "Golden Trilogy" gangsters and also from The Godfather gangsters.

As is the case for both Vito and Michael Corleone, the gangster's place of residence serves a dual purpose: it is a domestic space of family and also a space to conduct business. Such is the case for Tony Soprano, but with a difference: there is no clear division of spaces for Tony. As Cindy Donatelli and Sharon Alward point out, Tony "hangs around the house for a good part of

the day, picks up the newspaper in his bathrobe, watches TV, and eats cold cuts out of the fridge as Carmela watches him with alternating tenderness and disgust. Tony even conducts his other 'family' business in a concrete unfinished basement, with the fans turned on – can you imagine Don Corleone giving Tom Hagen an order while the washing machine goes through its rinse cycle?" (64). The problems that Tony has with maintaining the masculinity, power and importance of a gangster is reflected in his occupation of a feminine space and slacking in personal appearance. With the conclusion of The Sopranos coming in 2007, it will be interesting to watch the final image of Tony Soprano that the audience will be left with. I predict that Tony's inner conflicts will result in a fate similar to Michael Corleone's in that he will be left alienated from his family, shunned from his business and left to face the consequences of his choices all alone.

Although post-Godfather film and television texts have been veering away from the family-oriented, romantic gangster of The Godfather novel and films, the Corleones are not sleeping with the fishes just yet. If the gaming world is any indication, the pendulum is swinging back to the era of gangsters gone by. In March of 2006, the world saw the release of The Godfather: The Game. Players explore New York as a gangster in the Corleone Family, and scenes from the first film are animated with exquisite detail and included as part of the plot of the game. Dialogue from the first film, which was recorded by original actors from the first film, such as Marlon Brando, also makes this game very special. The release of the game based on Puzo's characters and Coppola's adaptations illustrates that contemporary audiences are still very interested not only in The Godfather as legend but in its romantic treatment of the gangster figure. Another testament to the power of the Corleone gangsters is the 2004 publishing of The Godfather Returns, written by Mark Winegardner, a novel that fills in the time between

Michael's instatement as the new Don and his move to Nevada in The Godfather, Part II. With the September 2006 release of a game based on the 1983 film Scarface, only time will tell whether the pendulum will remain on the side of the Corleones, or whether it will swing away from them and towards a new construction of the gangster, a staple figure in American culture.

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